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A R I S T O M E N E S.



ARISTOMENES:

A GRECIAN TALE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON :

ROBERT TYAS, 50, CHEAPSIDE,
AND J. MENZIES, EDINBURGH.

1838.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY THOMAS STANLEY,
WHEATSEAF-YARD, FARRINGTON STREET.

ARISTOMENES.

CHAPTER I.

' Oft do the threads of fate on trifles hang,
And hours mis-spent make up the sum of ill
Awarded for our crimes. Where duty calls,
No pleasure should entice."

It was on a dark stormy night that a young soldier, who had, during a short leave of absence, visited Sparta, was returning to Messene, the capital of his native country. The time granted by his superior officers had nearly elapsed, which made him anxious to cross the hills separating the two provinces, that he might be ready for his

journey to the capital on the following morning. During the early part of the day he had sauntered on the road, enjoying the beautiful scenery on every side, feeling certain that he should have sufficient light to find his way over the Spartan border. With this hope he had frequently turned his horse's head from the main road, to examine whatever happened to attract his attention.

Delighted with his ramble, the young soldier had not observed that the sun was fast sinking towards the west, or that the clouds were gathering round, threatening a storm, till he was roused from his reverie by a loud burst of thunder.

"A sorry prospect this," said Gonippus, "a storm is brooding, and I am yet on the Spartan side of the mountains, ignorant of my path, and with no chance of a star to direct me. But we must make the best of the hour before sun-set: a merry heart makes a light journey, so use your legs briskly, my sweetheart."

The horse seemed to perfectly understand his wishes, and set off at a full trot, as though conscious the day had been lost, and none of the journey performed. The young officer was too unreflecting, and had braved too many dangers to indulge a moment's fear from the awk-

wardness of his situation, but would gladly have met with some one to direct his journey, for he was hardly certain, so intricate was the road, whether he approached Sparta or Messenia.

The sun soon disappeared, and the darkness that followed was so intense, the young traveller was quite unable to see the path he was taking; but, throwing the reins on the neck of his steed, he intrusted himself to its sagacity. "Take your own course for once," said the youth, "we have been companions long enough to understand one another."

The horse feeling itself at liberty, and encouraged by the well-known pat, increased its pace. For several miles it continued at the same rate: but its master was not without some anxiety, as there seemed little probability of his meeting with any person who could give him information as to the road he was taking. The rain was now falling as though all the waters above were discharged from their ærial reservoirs; the whole canopy of heaven was a black expanse, impenetrable by a single ray of light except that of the vivid electric flash which rent the thick curtain from east to west. Sometimes Gonippus felt inclined to dismount and seek a night's lodging under the shelter of a bush, and would perhaps

have done so had he not been more careful of his noble beast than of himself. His situation, however, became every moment less comfortable, and his hope less active. Taking again the reins in his hand, he pulled up his horse, determined to wait awhile under the shelter of an oak, when he espied at a distance a glimmering light, which appeared to come from some place of habitation.

Feeling fresh confidence in the sagacity of his horse, Gonippus again committed himself to its direction. For a time he seemed to be going farther from the light, on which he kept his eye intently fixed, but after taking a circuitous path he found himself rapidly advancing towards the object. But it was not till he arrived at the spot that he discovered the light to proceed from a low mud hut, in an almost ruinous state. It was seldom a matter of anxiety to Gonippus where he found a lodging, and especially so on the present occasion.

“Ho! there, masters!” said the traveller; “have you a cover for a young soldier and his brute?”

“Whence do you come?” said a man from within, “and which way do you journey?”

“I am a Messenian,” Gonippus replied, “and have been to Sparta, and am now returning to my own country.”

“You had better then make the best of your journey,

for you are likely to see more during this night than generally falls to the lot of such youngsters," was the insolent answer.

"And will you not then give shelter, this piteous night to either my beast or I?"

"No," said the unknown personage, in a surly decisive tone.

"Will you then allow some one," said Gonippus, attempting to keep his temper, "to guide me to the Messenian side?"

"That is out of the course of things," was the reply; "the master does not guide his servant, and Spartans do not undertake that office for Messenians."

Gonippus found his philosophy sorely tried by this insolent reply, and much inclined to try strength of arms with the invisible.

"You err there," said the young soldier; "the Spartans are not left a choice; for, although the Messenians are accustomed to ask politely, they know how to enforce that which they condescend to request as a favour. So, as you do not choose to give me either a lodging or a guide, I will try to provide for myself."

Gonippus was in the act of dismounting, when two

men passed him, sufficiently near to be seen, and entered the house. One of them he recognised, or thought he did, as Euephnus, a Spartan who had long resided in Messenia, in the employ of a nobleman closely connected with the family of the reigning monarchs. He called him by name, but there was no reply; and finding himself mistaken in the hope of relief from this acquaintance, and knowing that he, as a stranger, would have little chance of making good his claim by force, against three, and perhaps more, persons, well acquainted with the locality, again threw the reins on the neck of his faithful horse, and pursued his journey.

The tempest was increasing in violence, and the young warrior was not unacquainted with the difficulty a stranger finds in crossing the mountains in fine weather, and with the assistance of daylight. It was an anxious time for even the light-hearted Gonippus, and he had some difficulty in determining whether it would be better to wait for the morning, or to proceed at all hazard. Had any shelter been offered from the pitiless storm, the question would have been soon decided; but as there was no means of escaping the inclemency of the weather, and as there was some mystery in the con-

duct of the uncivil cottager whom he had just left, the latter alternative was preferred. The love of discipline, and anxiety to obey the orders of his superior officers, were also stronger motives with him, than the certainty of exposure to great personal danger.

A consciousness of our inability to escape from an unpleasant situation often reconciles us to our lot, and gives courage for the performance of duties. Gonippus, irritated by the insolent and unfeeling conduct of the invisible Spartan, may have indulged in some violent exclamations, and secretly longed for an opportunity of chastising him; but whether it was the chilling effect of the storm, or the philosophical thought, that he must bear with calmness what could not be avoided, he certainly sooner recovered his composure than many men would do in the same situation. Entertaining himself as well as could be expected, with the hope of performing his journey in safety, and the pleasure of recounting his adventures, he trusted himself entirely to the instinct of his horse. His attention, however, was suddenly arrested by an indistinct form immediately before him, having some resemblance to a man, but in its motions altogether unlike. He called to it several times, but no answer was given; he attempted to pass it, but it still

kept the same distance, increasing or slackening its pace as necessary. In this way the young soldier travelled some miles, rather amused than annoyed by the obstinate taciturnity of his companion.

Gonippus had just commenced the ascent of the mountain when the road divided, one path leading to the right, and the other to the left. The horse suddenly came to a stand, as if unable to determine which it ought to take; but the traveller had hardly time to think of the inexplicable difficulty which now opposed his journey, before his companion advanced, and a being, which appeared but half human, seized the bridle and led the horse in the path it seemed least willing to take.

"Who are you?" said Gonippus; "and by what right do you seize the bridle of a traveller?"

"I am," said the stranger, "the slave of the mountains, and, at present, your guide to Messene."

"By what chance has it come to your knowledge that I am going to Messene?"

"Ask me no more questions," was the reply; "silence and a good guide are your only chances of safety."

The young traveller, inattentive to this injunction, continued his questions, but all attempts to obtain a

reply were ineffectual—the guide travelled without speaking a word. Now they were crossing a mountain torrent, and now climbing the precipitous masses, which projected from the mouths of huge chasms. Their's was a path never taken by travellers, and known only to a few of the most daring hunters. With great labour the horse climbed steeps rising one above another, and Gonippus would, more than once, have dismounted, had he not been conscious that all chance of safety in the rude district into which he had been so unceremoniously brought, depended on the knowledge of his guide, as a single false step might have precipitated him into the foaming torrent by the side of which they journied.

However unpleasant may have been the situation of the traveller during his journey, before he obtained his present guide, it was now much more so. He was certain that the path into which he had been brought was beset with danger, and the motive inducing his guide to choose it was not evident. Many suspicions passed through his mind, and he would probably have come to the conclusion, that his guide had been sent to destroy him in the ravines of the mountain, had he not been conscious that he was before completely in the

power of the surly Spartan, had personal violence been intended. Nor did his guide possess a perfect human form, and called himself the slave of the mountains, so that he might be what he had designated himself, and foreseeing danger, had benevolently undertaken to conduct him. These and many other fancies were indulged by Gonippus before he had reached the summit of the mountains.

As they began to descend, fresh courage sprung up in the heart of the adventurer, and especially when he saw, on the eastern sky, the red blushes of morning, and found himself on the high road to Messene.

“That is thy road,” said the guide; “thank the gods for thy safety; and if thou art a Messenian soldier, we may meet again.” Without waiting a reply he abruptly left his companion, taking a side path towards the sea shore.

The weariness of body which our young traveller may be thought to have felt from a long and dangerous journey, was so entirely prevented by the excitement of mind, that he was never perhaps more alive to every source of pleasure. As soon as the guide had left him, he leaped from his horse, and leading it down the gentle declivity, patting it with more than usual fondness,

stopped at a friendly hut, where they both obtained the necessary rest for the performance of the remainder of the journey.

The sun was now just rising above the horizon, dispelling the unburdened clouds which had poured their devastating showers on the earth; and clearing away from the eastern edge of the horizon the dark vapours, the bright source of life shot his beams upwards, melting the thickened clouds, and irradiating by degrees the whole heavens with his reflected splendour. Cloud after cloud, softened by his kindly rays, opened to admit the glory to the scenes they had deluged, as though repenting of the evils they had occasioned. The winds retired to the mountain caves, and all nature stood in awe of its king, the great ruler of day, receiving his presence in solemn silence.

A more splendid prospect is seldom witnessed than that which was presented to our traveller on the mountains separating the rival states of Lacedæmon and Messenia. The richly cultivated vallies of his native soil were illuminated by the first and richest hues of the rising sun, reflected by the broad surface of the ocean beyond. The hills beneath him were wafting, on the wings of the morning breeze, their purest incense from

every flower, as an offering to the Ruler of the rising sun; the sheep were bleating from every fold, and the shepherd's pipe repeated, again and again, a song of joy, and welcomed the coming day, while man, wakened from slumber, or relieved from his vigils, joined in the harmonious song of praise.

The sun had mounted high in the heavens before Gonippus resumed his journey to Messene. Pondering over the various circumstances that had befallen him during his journey from Sparta; his mind was strongly impressed with the belief that the peace between Lacedæmon and Messenia would not long continue. The scene at the cottage, recalled to his recollection many apparent inattentions he had received at Sparta; the interference of the guide conducting him over an almost impassable country, and his farewell speech, that if he were a Messenian soldier he should meet him again, strengthened his fears, which were but too fully realized.

Before we close this chapter, which introduces to the reader the state of feeling between the Spartans and Messenians at the period at which our tale commences, it may be necessary to make a few general remarks.

The abolition of monarchy in Greece, soon after the Trojan war, was, singular as it must appear, a means of promoting the intellectual power of the people, though attended by many temporary evils. To trace the formation of national or individual character, is a difficult task; yet it is quite evident that Greece owes all its glory to a sudden change in the form of its government at an early period of its history. When the authority of kings was used to promote licentiousness, and to retard the progress of virtue—when kings themselves followed the dictates of ambition and avarice, trampling upon the liberties of the subject, the patrician and plebeian rose together to shake off the yoke of oppression. A vicious monarchical government thus fell lifeless in every Grecian state, except Sparta, before the independent and illustrious virtue of the people. The evils immediately following were great; but as they were only produced by the excitement resulting from a sudden change, a more healthy state of public feeling quickly succeeded, and developed itself in acts of valour and magnanimity which established the national sovereignty in arms, arts, and literature.

The scions of power, are for the most part, base truckling dependants on the throne or the state. A tyrannical

government is made more odious to the people who live under its infectious atmosphere, by the oppressive conduct of its subordinates, who, hoping to please their masters, act the part of petty tyrants. So a magistracy chosen by communities, to protect their liberties, frequently exercise their power by invading the most sacred privileges of those who invested them with authority. It was thus in Greece. The evils of monarchy were more than counterbalanced by the vices and oppressive conduct of the Archons. A universal civil war followed. Almost every city asserted its right to freedom, by separating from the parent state ; and assuming a self jurisdiction, established a temporary despotic government.

This disunion introduced crime and confusion, and the evils would have been much greater, had not the Amphictyonic Counsel exerted its influence in modifying the turbulent feeling. This institution was, in fact, a representative assembly of the Grecian States, in which the rights and privileges of each were discussed, and for the most part, defended. The vernal assembly was held at Delphi, celebrated throughout Greece, even at this period, for its oracle ; and the autumnal at Thermopylæ. The Amphictyons, like other public council-

lors, in all ages, were not invariably faithful to their trust, although every member of the assembly was compelled to declare, bound by an oath to the gods, that he would never subvert the rights of an Amphyctyonic city.

Among the many sanguinary wars carried on between neighbouring states, at this early period of Grecian history, none have been described with so much particularity as the long contest between the Lacedæmonians and Messenians. The treatment received by Gonippus, the young Messenian soldier, on his return from Sparta, will give the reader some idea of the state of feeling between the parties, previous to the commencement of hostilities. The Messenians were unsuspecting, and indulged all the courtesies due to a neighbouring state. The Lacedæmonians were covetous of the cultivated fields of the Messenians, and were ready to avail themselves of any means to seize by force, that which they could not demand as a right.

CHAPTER II.

" The bay trees in our country are all wither'd,
And meteors fright the fixed stars of heaven ;
The pale-faced moon looks bloody on the earth,
And lean-looked prophets whisper fearful change ;
Rich men look sad, and ruffians dance and leap."

RICHARD THE SECOND.

POLYCHARES was a Messenian of noble birth. In the service of his country he had spent his days ; and though old age had crept upon him, crowning him with reverence, he had lost but little of the bold and manly aspect obtained by frequent exposure to danger. Benevolent by nature, and possessed of immense wealth, he gained among his fellow countrymen, who remembered how much they owed to his prudence and valour, the proud

title of "Father of Messenia." From his youth he had held high rank in the armies of his country, and in those dangerous exploits, where the volunteers were permitted to choose their leader, Polychares was invariably selected. The youth venerated him, the old men blessed him, and in his name the women found a tower of safety. The widow devoted her only son, the solace and support of her age, if Polychares was to be the general, and the maiden enlisted her lover in his ranks, that he might reap some portion of his fame, or imbibe his spirit.

The active services in which Polychares had been engaged during his youth, had so broken his iron frame, and the infirmities of age had so weakened his energies, that, resigning his duties to a son who inherited the virtues and courage of his sires, he sought to pass his remaining days in quietude and seclusion. One other child he had—a maiden—not less distinguished for her bravery and patriotism, than for the tender sensibilities most characteristic of women. The beauty and virtue of Helen were constant subjects of praise, and not a youth in Messenia would have refused an enterprize, however dangerous or desperate, encouraged by the smile of her approval. Her figure was majestic, but not masculine ; and her carriage was so graceful and

unrestrained, that she commanded respect; while she ensured by her eloquent countenance and lively conversation, the love or estimation of all. In her presence the brave gathered fresh courage, and the timid felt a glow of confidence which warmed their breasts at no other time.

Woman is man's best guide and instructor, when she can shake off the timidity and petty jealousy of her sex. Helen was far raised above such unworthy feelings by disposition as well as by duty. When her brother was irritated by the insinuations of pretended friends, and the taunts of his enemies, she calmed his passions and elevated his courage, by recalling to his recollection the noble deeds of his ancestors, and the manner in which they had performed the duties that now devolved on him. With the petty quarrels of the state Helen never interfered. It was nothing to her who rose into the estimation of the populace, or who was deposed from the throne of its fickle affection. She was a patriot, and to secure her country's welfare, would have given up all her expectations and comforts. But she had sufficient foresight to perceive that the calm now spread over the affairs of Messenia was the prelude to a storm, which would require the most energetic and skilful management to avoid or weather.

Polychares, enfeebled by age, chiefly amused himself with his domestic affairs. He had passed through a life of extraordinary activity, and his duties had frequently been as repulsive to his feelings, as a man, as they were imperative on him as a citizen. To soothe his declining years, and encourage his hopes, Helen resorted to all those arts of affection by which women so well know how to please. To her lyre she sung the Homeric songs the Grecian dames repeated to their sons when the warriors were fighting on the fields of Troy:—now they were mournful strains that wept over the absence of husband and lover, and now martial chords urging to conquest. While she swept the pensive strings the old man wept, but when she struck the martial tones he started up, and would have braced his armour on again, to seek his country's foes upon the field of strife.

Polychares spent the greater portion of his time at Ino, a small village on the shore of the Messenian Gulf, a few hours' journey from the capital. He owned here a beautiful villa, constructed in the best style of art, then rapidly rising towards that elegance and simplicity which, in after ages, so peculiarly distinguished the Grecian architecture. It was built on a declivity that led to the

sea shore, and offered an uninterrupted view of the broad and beautiful gulf. Behind it was sheltered by verdant hills, almost enclosing this spot of perennial beauty.

On the morning that followed the stormy night on which Gonippus crossed the mountains from Lacedæmon, Panormus paid an early visit to his venerable parent at Ino. The sun had just risen above the cloud of mist, which, emerging from the ocean, had for a time obscured the splendour of his beams, and Polychares was listening to the reports his son had brought from Messene, when Euephnus was seen approaching the house. This man was too frequent a visiter here to excite any unusual feeling in the mind of any member of the little party.

“It has been,” said Panormus, “a night of horrors ; such as no Messenian living remembers. The very children in their cradles awoke, and cried to hear the fearful sounds which filled the air, and the earth rocked to and fro, as if to soothe them to sleep again, that it might work increasing mischief undisturbed. Then, at midnight when the tempest was raving in its fury, lights in heaven were seen approaching Messene, which seemed at last to remain stationary over the

city. The storm subsided before the sun rose, and I have hastened here, fearing that you might be troubled with false reports, and fancy evils which had not happened."

"There is more superstition in this tale than fact," said Helen. "Do you imagine the downfall of Messenia to be foretold by a violent tempest? Our country is still safe if it has not a more unrelenting enemy than the terrible storm which passed over it last night. The gods will preserve us from such evils; may brave citizens repel every other foe."

"You speak too lightly of what was seen last night," said Panormus, pettishly, ashamed of the reproof he had received; "the oldest and wisest citizens think the signs tokens of evil; nothing more terrible was ever seen by our forefathers since the time of the Trojan war."

"Dear Panormus," said the beautiful girl, throwing herself into his arms, "be assured these are not times to frighten women and cowards with tales of prodigies and sights. Although you and others are so unsuspecting of the designs of Sparta, a great evil must come upon our country, unless the brave avert it. To you only, or at least to you and another," she said, blushing,

“we all look for protection. But while you lead armies to battle, and keep the soldier to his duty, you must support the energy of the public mind, and drive away those superstitious fears which, if they once infect the women and children, will soon prevent men from performing their duty.”

At this moment, Euephnus entered the room. He was a man, a little below the common stature, thick set but not corpulent. He appeared to be about forty years of age, but his hard weather-beaten countenance proved that he had seen some service. His manners were extremely frank and open, but there was a lowering glance of eye so peculiar, and a tone of voice so rough and unpleasant, that a stranger would not perhaps have felt any confidence in him as a companion, if he had been unexpectedly thrown into his society at night fall.

Euephnus was a Spartan by birth, but had long been intrusted by Polychares with the charge of his numerous flocks, in which the wealth of the nobles in these early ages chiefly consisted. He described himself as the proprietor of large estates and flocks in Sparta, of which he had been deprived by one more powerful than himself. When he first induced Polychares to take him into his

service, and intreated Messenian protection, he was viewed by the people as a spy; but the worthy noble pitying his distress, gave him employment in his household, and raised him from one office to another, until at last he intrusted to his charge the entire management of his property. The Messenian peasantry, however, were by no means satisfied with his character. The mothers frightened their children with his name, and those men with whom he was most frequently in company, could not altogether shake off a feeling of fear, always produced in his presence. There was but one who seemed to have entire confidence in his honesty, and that was Polychares, a man of such generous principles, that he was altogether unacquainted with the feeling of suspicion.

Helen entertained a very different opinion of Euephnus. She treated him as though she knew he was a villain. What had passed between him and this beautiful maiden, no one knew; but it was observed by all, that his visits to Ino had been of late much less frequent than they once were, and that Helen avoided his company whenever she could do so conveniently. His appearance at this time was, as usual, a signal for her to retire; and as soon as he entered the room, she left it.

Euephnus followed her with a look which spoke the language of malignity, rather than that of love; he looked like one who felt his disappointment past, and in possession of a means by which he could repay the indifference, or rather dislike, with which he was treated. The look was but momentary, and observed by neither Polychares or Panormus, for he instantly recovered his composure, and walking up to the former with his usual confidence, saluted him :—

“You are come in early time, this morning,” said the old general, “How fared the flocks last night. A strange storm has passed over Messenia, I hear, and some mischief must have been done.”

“Good Polychares,” said the Spartan, “I bring you both good and bad news. It was a terrific night; heaven, air, earth, and sea, were miserably tortured by the gods, and seemed to groan aloud. Our poor country, pardon me, for Messenia is to me, as though it were my birth place, has been, I fear, sadly devastated by the angry elements. The impetuous winds flew over the plains, pursued by liquid fire, and destroyed everything that stood in their path : what the hurricane spared, the lightning consumed. It was a sight that made the blood curdle, for the sun now shines on

stubbled fields, that were but yesterday rich with the golden ear ready for harvest."

"Speak all Euephnus," said Polychares, "we must bear with calmness what the gods ordain; for my brave country I sorrow; but tell the worst."

"The gods do bless the virtuous," said Euephnus, "and though I bring you news of great distress, it is not unmixed with comfort. Your crops are chiefly gathered in, and those which were out, the tempest has spared. But when the storm raged at its height, a band of Spartans came down on your folds, covered by the darkness, and drove away a portion of the flock. The herdsmen affrighted with the storm, crouched under the huts, and would not attempt a rescue. I pursued alone, and withstood the robbers, of whom there were but three, attended by a slave. But they would soon have overpowered me, and I was compelled to make my escape, though I succeeded in capturing the slave."

"What information," said Panormus, "has the slave given you concerning the banditti? We are not yet so utterly dismayed by Spartan power, or so fearful of Spartan revenge, as to submit to their plundering us without making an attempt to recover our property, and punish the thieves. If our own dependants are

not sufficient to effect our objects, the state will not be slow to resent this insult on my father, and to grant me a sufficient number of armed men, to recover the flocks and punish the robbers."

"My honoured master," Euephnus replied, addressing himself to Polychares, "Messenia is doubly indebted to you; first, for your own services, and then for leaving one in charge of her armies, who is not less anxious, or able, than yourself to protect her interests, and secure her independence. But we need little assistance in this matter: the slave I captured is a Spartan, but was stolen from his rightful master, and has been treated with great cruelty by the robbers. From him I learn that the three freebooters are unarmed, and I know they cannot pass the Messenian border before to-morrow morning. From some enquiries I have made of the slave, I have also learned that he who robbed me of my patrimony, is now dead, and that these same stragglers are in possession of my lands."

"If this be all," said Panormus, "be in readiness at the glen by night fall, and it is strange if we cannot, before morning, bring back the flocks and punish the thieves. If we can then help you Euephnus, in the recovery of your lost fortunes, you shall find that your

friends will not be slow to make every effort, consistent with the interest and dignity of Messenia."

Polychares gave his consent to this arrangement, and the place and time of meeting being arranged, Euephnus rose to depart. He seemed, however, more anxious than usual, to impress upon the minds of his employers, a proper estimate of his merit, in risking his own life among a resolute band of robbers, whose numbers he did not even know.

"I think it better," he said, when taking his leave, "that we should go unaccompanied, or we may be impeded by the fears, or too prompt zeal of our companions. Secrecy is, above all things, necessary; for if our expedition be known, we may be waylaid in the passes. As a guide, we will take the captured slave, but all other assistance must be refused, if we would succeed in our enterprise."

With this admonition, he took his leave, only turning as he left the door, to remind his proposed companion, that punctuality must be observed, and that not a moment ought to be lost, as it was necessary to come up with the banditti, on the Messenian border, before morning. Panormus nodded acquiescence, and immediately left the apartment to prepare for the expedition.

CHAPTER III.

If that be your walk, you have not far ;
So much the nearer danger : go, and speed."

PARADISE LOST.

PANORMUS had just commenced the necessary preparation for the journey when Helen entered his room, which none but she and a friend who was often his companion at Ino, were permitted to visit. It was a small octagonal apartment, fitted up with great taste. The three windows in front, facing the sea, extending to the floor, answered the purpose of ingress and egress to a plain but elegant Doric portico. A broad flight of marble steps led in two terraces to the sea shore. Upon the upper landing of this magnificent staircase,

Helen was accustomed to sit when the moon was shining brightly on the smooth waters, and sing to her brother his favourite airs; and sometimes they were joined by a friend for whom Panormus and Helen felt equal affection, although the character of their regard may not have been of the same kind.

Around the room were hung shields, spears, bows and arrows, swords, and other warlike weapons and armour, as an antiquary would now decorate the walls of his study with the instruments and funereal appendages of former times. There was, however, a remarkable difference between the appearance of the ancient and modern study—in the former, the instruments were bright and ready for immediate use; in the latter they are tarnished and dusty, the value being increased in proportion to the amount of cobweb surrounding them. To have had anything unfit for the purpose to which it was to be applied, would have been thought a disgrace by the warrior, and the antiquary would think it equally reproachful to have anything that could be used.

At each angle of the apartment was fixed a polished column, and against one of these rested a case of spears. Panormus had selected a well tried spear of ash, and

placed it with his bow and arrows near the table, and was reaching down his leathern buckler, when Helen entered the room. For a moment she stood surprised at the warlike preparations her brother was making, but immediately stepped forward, and leaning against the table, turned towards the window, and in a deep sigh expressed her thoughts, sufficiently loud to be heard,—“And has it come to this already?”

“To what, Helen?” said Panormus, turning round with his buckler in his hand, and with a forced smile on his lip.

“Think not, my dear brother, to quiet a woman’s fear by keeping her in ignorance. I have long foreseen the disasters which are coming on Messenia, and have braced my spirit to support the worst. Let what will come, I can bear it; I can part with home; ah, and more than home, (how much more I cannot tell,) should my country require a greater sacrifice. But I cannot bear the suspense attending ignorance, now I fear and am prepared for the worst. Trust me Panormus, I will neither reveal the secrets of the state, or try to hinder you in the path of duty.”

“My dear Helen, you do me injustice, and give yourself pain without cause; I know no secret of the state,

and have not even such gloomy apprehensions of public misfortune as seem to afflict you."

"Why then," said the excited girl, playing with the strings of the bow, and looking earnestly at her brother, "why are you making these warlike preparations?"

Panormus now related, as accurately as his memory would serve him, the conversation with which the reader is already acquainted, and especially the tale told by Euephnus. But as he proceeded with his description, which to him, appeared a simple and natural account of an accident most likely to occur, she assumed a more commanding, not to say scornful, attitude. Her eye glanced from side to side, but fixed upon him, who addressed her, expressed a feeling of deep pity not unmingled with anger.

"And do you intend," said Helen, with much emphasis, "to accompany him?"

"Certainly I do," was the hasty reply.

"You have, then, Panormus, forgotten all that your country demands at your hands, and follow in the train of a Spartan vagabond and spy, to seek sheep at a moment in which your country requires more than usual watchfulness and courage in the defence of her liberties."

“Your opinion of Euephnus, Helen, is formed on préjudice, and your fear of Spartan influence, is such as might be expected from a woman; affection and fear overcome your better reason, and generally sound judgment.”

At this moment a young man, instantly recognized as Aristomenes, was seen approaching the house; and Panormus anxious to put an end to a conversation in which he felt himself already vanquished, left the room to welcome his friend. Helen was still standing by the table apparently arranging the arrows in a quiver, when he returned with Aristomenes. A slight blush passed over her countenance as the young Messenian chief entered the room, and advancing respectfully, saluted her by kissing her hand.

When Polychares retired from the fatigues of war, this young nobleman was chosen to the joint command of the army with Panormus, by the united sufferages of his sovereigns and the soldiers. With his companion in arms, he had been from childhood on the strictest terms of friendship, and Polychares was no less dear to him than if he had been his own parent. Yet no two persons could be more opposite in temper, and in the general qualities of mind, than were Panormus and

Aristomenes. In person they somewhat resembled each other, though the latter might perhaps have boasted of the more perfect form. His slender and graceful figure was in strict harmony with the fine manly features of his countenance, so dignified and full of youthful energy, that his companions might have forgotten his apparently proud superiority of manners. Panormus was irritable and quickly offended; generous, but headstrong, and governed by prejudices. Aristomenes was distinguished by discretion and sound judgment; to his opinions the old men listened with attention and respect, and among the poor he was esteemed the only man capable of supporting the dignity and protecting the liberty of Messenia. He was one with whom no familiarity, unsuited to his station, could even be attempted; but his tender heart was never unaffected by the tale of woe, or his passionate love of country, permitted to usurp the place of universal benevolence.

From his youth he had been the companion of Panormus, and still entertained for him the affection which he had formed in childhood. To Polychares he was greatly indebted for his station in the council and army of his country, for with the solicitude of a father, and the caution of a patriot, he had prepared him, by

example and advice, to occupy with honour, the high station he held. Aristomenes was therefore always a welcome visiter at Ino, and it would be unjust to Helen, if the reader were to imagine that his visits were more unpleasant to her than to either her father or brother. But, however she may have been accustomed to receive the young soldier, she was greatly pleased to see him on the present occasion.

"See, Aristomenes," said Helen, "my brother is preparing for an expedition, in which he will require your aid, and much more—your advice."

"Both are at his disposal, Helen, whenever they are required, and can be of any service."

"Well, I believe," she said, smiling, "he may dispense with one on the present occasion, but I am sure he requires the other, whether he desires it or not."

"Helen has formed very high notions of the duties of a warrior," said Panormus, attempting to shake off the chagrin he felt at her remarks, and imagines it impossible to obtain honour, or enforce justice, except at the head of the army: she would fain see us carrying war and devastation into the heart of Sparta; but has great grief that a few Spartan freebooters should be

punished for their brave attempts to enrich themselves by seizing our flocks."

"You do me wrong, Panormus, either by misinterpreting my motives, or misunderstanding my fears. I wish no ill to Sparta, though I would it were my lot to serve Messenia by defending her borders, instead of requiring protection from others. Nor do I wish for the escape of a band of miscreants, by whatever name they may be called. I grieve to see you the dupe of artifice, and sacrificing yourself at a moment when Messenia, your aged father, and dependant sister, stand most in need of your protection. You have long known Euephnus to be, though he has unfortunately the confidence of our father, an enemy to Messenia, and he is now alluring you over the border, that he may deprive your country of your energies, and your family, especially myself, of your protection. I boast of no power of predicting the future," she said, throwing herself into his arms, and looking earnestly in his face, with her eyes suffused with tears, "but, if you trust yourself with Euephnus, you will fall into a snare, and be lost to us and to Messenia. The very preparations you are making prove that you are not without fear."

Aristomenes was too much affected by the sorrow of

the beautiful maid to offer either advice or consolation, and Panormus was, for a moment, overcome with the energetic appeal of his sister, but his pride and headstrong temper checked his inclination to yield to the solicitations of affection.

“In one thing I have been wrong, Helen, and am properly reprov’d,” said Panormus; “I have been preparing for this foolish encounter as though it were one of moment, for which there can be no occasion, if it be true that injustice is the parent of cowardice.”

Aristomenes too well knew the character of Euephnus, to think the fears of Helen altogether unfounded, and joined her in an attempt to change the hasty resolution Panormus had formed. Well acquainted with the obstinacy of his disposition, he hoped for success from arguments, appealing to his feelings rather than his judgment; but all was in vain, he persisted in his determination to accompany Euephnus, whatever might be the consequences.

There was now only one chance of preventing him from undertaking the intended journey, and that was by detecting and exposing the treacherous motives of Euephnus. With this object Aristomenes offered to accompany his friend as far as the place where he had

promised to meet the Spartan, and Panormus accepted his company, rather for the purpose of terminating a conversation, in which he had scarcely kept his temper, than from any desire to have his company.

Soon after sunset, Panormus and Aristomenes were prepared for their journey. It was a lovely evening, such as can only be enjoyed in Greece. The moon was nearly full, and threw a pale light on the smooth face of the ocean, which it reflected back to heaven. Not a breath ruffled the vast expanse of waters. All nature seemed to be resting from the fatigue it had suffered during the late storm, and no sound broke upon the still air of night but the voices of the little group on the terrace.

Helen now leaned carelessly on the balcony, and watched the young men descending the steps towards the sea shore. She had parted with nearly all she loved on earth, and her only protectors. "I would," she thought, "that I had detained Aristomenes, for if he also should fall into the snare. But no! he is prudent, and may save my brother." Indulging all her gloomy apprehensions, she watched with an earnestness of which she was unconscious, the tall figures of the youths, who were seen moving at a quick pace along

the shore ; at one time close to the edge of the water, on which their shadows were thrown, and at another, beneath the bank which had been raised to restrain the waves from the cultivated lands beyond. Having passed round the bay, they ascended an eminence which led to a thick, and at all times, dreary forest. Panormus walked briskly on, and entered the almost pathless covert without waiting to see if his sister were still watching them. Aristomenes, who had frequently looked back with more than usual anxiety, turned towards the fair one, and removing his cap, waved it to her, and kissing his hand, hastily followed his companion.

Panormus was now walking with all his speed, indulging more ill-feeling than was becoming in one who had so many pretensions to the character of a great mind, and without speaking to his companion. The moon was still shining, diffusing her silvery beams around, but the foliage was so thick that she gave a very chequered and uncertain light to our travellers. After passing through the forest they came to an extensive heath, which was approached by a hill, so steep, and in some places so precipitous, they were compelled to wind round the base for a considerable distance

before they could begin to ascend. Not a single habitation or tree could be seen on the heath, in any direction; the furze was the only evidence of life.

"A dreary place this," said Aristomenes, determined to break silence, and enter into conversation with his companion, if possible, "for a midnight encounter. It might make a brave man's heart flutter."

"Yes, truly; and I wish we were well over it. This spot has been from childhood associated in my mind with fear. When a boy I could never imagine any scene terrible without picturing to myself its performance on this wild heath."

"You have been here before, then," said Aristomenes.

"Never over the heath: I have seen it from the spot on which we now stand. There is a tradition, that none of the house of Polychares can pass it thrice. Several of my ancestors have died here, some in their country's, and some in private quarrels; and those who have more faith in charms than I have, tell us that it will be the curse of our house, till its fairest daughter shall wed him who rules the destinies of Messenia."

"I wonder, Panormus, that you should have taken

such a path," said Aristomenes, "knowing this tradition; for, however light we may think of the vulgar records, they are apt to cross the mind in the moment of danger, and do not add to our self-possession and courage."

"That may be true, but I have always determined to break the efficacy of the charm. I would not, however, have so far braved the fears of my sister Helen on the present occasion, if it had been possible to reach the place of destination in time, by any other road."

This gave Aristomenes an opportunity of remarking that it would be unwise to intrust himself too confidently in the hands of Euephnus. "He may be honest," he said, "but twelve years residence in Messenia, under your father's protection, has not been sufficient to remove from him the epithet by which he was first known; the children still call him the Spartan Spy."

"There is certainly something in the manner of Euephnus," said Panormus, "which is by no means pleasing to a stranger; but it is an old adage, 'nothing wears out so slowly as a bad name.' It is foolish, Aristomenes, to suppose that he can intend me, personally, any harm, for he has had innumerable opportunities of effecting such an object, without risking

either life or reputation, had he desired it. I am by no means so certain as my father, that he wishes well to Messenia, but Helen's fears are as childish as your own credulity, whenever she attempts the part of a prophetess."

"You wrong Helen," Aristomenes replied, "by judging of her mind, as if it were inferior to our own. She does not indulge childish fears, and though she has the sensitive feelings of her sex, they are governed by an heroic patriotism, seldom possessed by men who have gained laurels on the field of mortal combat." The young hero paused, as though he had already said too much in the praise of the lady to please his companion, who was not a little jealous of any rival, that could for a moment shadow his own victorious crown. "On this subject, however," said the panegyrist, "we shall not disagree, Panormus; but you do yourself injustice, by supposing that your life is of no more importance to our Spartan foes at the present time, than it was when Euephnus was your play-fellow."

The travellers had now reached a spot from which they had a view of the surrounding country,—a scene grand beyond the power of description. They had passed over only a small portion of the heath, but the

country around was distinctly seen by the soft light of the moon, so clear was the atmosphere. On every side, the heath was surrounded by an extensive forest, and in the distance were gently sloping hills, some richly cultivated, and others beautifully wooded. Here and there were seen in the valleys, fertilizing rivers, flowing towards the Ionian sea, whose broad expanse added a new and ever pleasing feature to the landscape. While they stood admiring the extent and grandeur of the scene, a light cloud passed over the moon, which threw a slight shadow over the surrounding prospect, and aroused Panormus to the recollection of his intended journey.

“Come, come,” he said, “we must haste hence; my time of meeting Euephnus is near at hand, and he will doubt if I have courage for the adventure, should I keep him waiting.”

“Did you see,” asked Aristomenes, in a low voice, scarcely conscious of what his companion had said, “the faint light glimmering in the furze, on the right? There! it is shining again, and I can distinctly see a human figure.”

“Oh! it is some vagrant,” said Panormus, who had seen as much, or more, than his companion, “seeking a

roofless home from the rising tempest, and lighting her fire on the desolate heath, driven from the habitation of man, by some cruel oppression or injustice. Let us move towards the spot, for it must never be said, that the troops of Messenia, are led by men, who did not dare to follow a light on the heath of the Red Hand, or would not afford protection to a distressed wanderer."

The young warriors were soon sufficiently near the spot, from which the light came, to see a female figure sitting by a dull fire of furze, which she had apparently just kindled. She was wrapt in a long white vestment, so formed as to show her elegant figure, but a hood was drawn closely round her head, almost covering her face. They saw enough, however, to know that she was young and handsome. The black ringlets, scarcely hidden beneath the white head-covering, formed a strong contrast with the colour of her robe, and the palid hue of her countenance. The youths came close to her without being observed, but when she first saw them, she evinced no surprise. Rising from the ground on which she was sitting near the fire, and placing herself in an attitude that exhibited her fine figure, she fixed her eyes on Panormus, and said :—

“What! are you seeking your ill fortunes already? return Panormus! but not over the heath, if you would save yourself from trouble, and your country from war!”

“And who are you,” said Panormus, rather startled with this abrupt and personal address; “can you find no better employment than to sit on a barren heath to prophesy to travellers?”

“Haste you to Messene,” said the female, turning to Aristomenes; “there are many who will want you before the moon wanes. And you, Panormus, may seek misfortune in Sparta, since the fates will have it so. Aristomenes shall govern Messenia, when you are in a Spartan prison. I am,” she said, replying to the question that had been put, and standing in a menacing attitude, with her right arm stretched out, as if in the act of supplication, “the red-handed sybil, whom neither you, or any of your house, can see but thrice, unless the charm shall be broken.”

She instantly turned from the astonished youths, who intently gazed on her, till lost in the darkness that had been insensibly creeping over the heavens. Amazed with what they had seen and heard, they stood for some time after her disappearance, looking at the empty air, as if they anticipated she would again

present herself in a new form. A loud clap of thunder roused them from their reverie, and they renewed their journey, without an intimation of the necessity, from either party. They had nearly crossed the heath, and were approaching the place where Panormus was to meet Euephnus, when the hasty and obstinate youth to whom the sybil's warning was chiefly addressed, broke silence :—

“ I scarcely know, Aristomenes, what opinion to form of the mysterious interview we have had. The appearance of the woman exactly corresponds with the accounts I have received from my father and grandsire ; the blood-red hand too, and the flowing white vestment, I well remember, were particularly described as characteristics of the sibyl. But it is strange she should be seen on such a frivolous occasion, and still more so, that she should address you, who can be in no manner connected with the charm. To tell you truly, there is a lurking suspicion in my mind, that it is a scene prepared by those who know as much of us, as we know of ourselves. How did the prophesy run ? That you should govern Messenia, when I am in a Spartan prison. I give you joy my dear friend of your charge, and must say, that you

are, of all men, the most likely to enjoy the honour so liberally dispensed by the lady. But if I may, on the other hand, judge of the remaining prophesy, I am less likely than many men I know, to fulfil it to the letter."

Aristomenes was little inclined to treat the interview or the information with so much jocularly: but whether he was led to exercise more faith from the expectation of a brilliant fortune, than he would have felt, had he been in the same situation as Panormus, we cannot tell. It is very probable that he was not altogether unmindful of Helen, for the tradition said, the charm could not be broken till the fairest daughter of the house of Polychares was wed to him who ruled the destinies of Messenia; and the sybil had informed him he should govern his country. Who can, he thought, be fairer among women, than Helen. Aristomenes was not, however, one who would willingly sacrifice the happiness of another to secure his own; but feeling certain that some treacherous attempt would be made on the life or liberty of Panormus, if he persisted in his determination to accompany Euephnus, was resolved to make another attempt to dissuade him.

“We have, my dear friend,” said the noble youth, seizing the hand of his companion, “been play-fellows in childhood, fellow-soldiers in manhood, and the gods forbid I should enjoy honours in which you cannot partake. Your father has been a father to me; your sister is more than a sister, and you are more than a brother. I cannot think the interview we have had, a deception; nor should the warning be disregarded by you. Let us haste back to the capital, which we can do without passing the heath, and take immediate means to enquire into the real character and present motives of the man with whom you intend to entrust yourself. For the sake of your distressed sister and country, I beseech you, listen to my request.”

“Ask it not again, Aristomenes; the die is cast, and I will abide the result. Shall it be said that I feared to accompany an unarmed and unskilful keeper of flocks, because one woman who loves me had fears, and another, whom I know not, prophesied misfortunes? No; if I were as certain of treachery, as I am incapable of fear, I would rather venture all, than give occasion for such a remark from either enemy or friend. We are near the place of meeting, and you must soon

return to Messene; but as you love me, speak not of anything you have heard or seen to-night."

Aristomenes was grieved at the obstinacy of his friend, but too well knew his character to have attempted to dissuade him, even if there had been an opportunity. The hollow voice of Euephnus, however, was now heard, as if complaining to his companion in no very measured terms.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Now the fair goddess, Fortune,
Fall deep in love with thee ; and her great charms
Misguide thy opposers’ swords.”

CORIOLANUS.

WHEN the two friends arrived at the place of meeting, Euephnus was standing near a fire kindled on the ground, complaining bitterly of the delay of his young master. The spot was remarkably solitary and gloomy. It was a dark nook at the edge of the forest, which had been seen from the heath by the Messenians. The trees on either side threw their branches over each other so as to form an almost impenetrable screen to the rays of a meridian sun. A stream of water ran tardily through,

the valley rippling over the large stones which the violent floods, frequently rushing from the surrounding elevated country, brought in their course. Dark clouds now covered the heavens, and a very uncertain light was thrown upon the scene, while the rising wind moaning in the depth of the forest, added to the melancholy feeling which the spot itself, without any adventitious circumstances, was calculated to produce upon minds less agitated than those of the Messenian travellers.

By the fire was sitting a youth whose dress was that of a Spartan slave, but who might have been mistaken for the presiding demon of the spot. He was half-sitting, and half-standing, for his knees were raised to sustain his elbows, while his head seemed to require the support of his hands. From the posture in which he sat, and the position in which he was seen, it was not easy to recognise much resemblance to a human form. As soon as he heard the approaching footsteps, he turned his head in the direction from which the noise proceeded, and there was something so truly comic in his physiognomy, that the good breeding of the Messenians could scarcely have been impugned had they indulged a laugh at his expense. His large projecting eyes which glistened with an inexpressible

broad humour and mischief, were strangely contrasted with his thin, pallid, and almost shrivelled, face. His mouth was of an enormous width, and being never completely shut, had he been a modern fashionable, he might have been charged with the conceit of exhibiting a row of pearl white teeth, that would have graced any face but his own. When he saw the strangers he started on his feet, as if prepared to immediately commence his journey with more than necessary speed. The spectators could no longer resist their inclination to laugh, in spite of the serious impressions made on them by the sibyl. His short but lank figure was illuminated by the light of the burning embers, and for a time he stood with his eyes fixed on Panormus, without moving any portion of his body, as if to give the Messenians an opportunity of thoroughly examining his person. He was what is vulgarly called bandy-legged, or more properly, slightly bowed, yet sufficiently so, as to have allowed a moderate sized hog to jump between his legs without any chance of disturbing his centre of gravity. His arms reached fairly down to his knees, although he stood as upright as a drill serjeant. He was, however, by no means pleased with the ill-timed merriment of the Messenians, and suddenly started off,

whether on legs or hands they could not tell, with a velocity almost incredible.

“Alvattes, stop!” shouted Euephnus in his loudest, and fiercest tone, at the same time springing forward and seizing him by one of his arms, which swung by his side like pendulums beating seconds isochronously.

“And who,” said Panormus, “is this strange being whom you have provided as our companion in the journey?”

“It is the slave,” Euephnus replied, “I captured last night from the banditti, and as we must be governed by his knowledge of the country, in our attempt to overtake them, and re-capture the flocks, the merriment in which you have indulged at the expense of his person, was not, to say the least, judicious.”

But this was not the only source of annoyance to Euephnus, for he was little pleased with the expectation of having Aristomenes as a companion in the intended journey, and began to suggest difficulties he had not before sufficiently considered. The night was far advanced, (for Panormus had not kept his appointment within two hours of the time fixed,) there was a prospect of another storm—the slave seemed to be sulky,

and might mislead them, and many other objections, were in their turn, urged by the reluctant, and apparently undecided, Euephnus. But Panormus was not to be turned from his resolution, and upbraided the Spartan for the mention of such excuses, resolutely expressing his intention of proceeding at all hazards. Nor had he much difficulty in overcoming the scruples of Euephnus, when he intimated to Aristomenes, the necessity of his immediate return to Messene.

“It is true,” said the Spartan, “that for the tempest we are well provided, and though the night is far gone, we may make up by speed what we need in time. And as to the slave, he must risk the vitality of his own mis-shapen, though doubtless, to him, valuable form, in any attempt to deceive us. But before we commence our journey, it may be well to take some food and prepare ourselves for the necessary fatigue.”

To this proposition none of the party offered any objection, but instantly seated themselves around the blazing fire. No contrast could be more striking than that of the fine forms of the Messenian youths, and the crippled insignificant body of the Spartan slave. The feeling of mirth, perhaps of personal satisfaction,

to which Panormus had given way, was soon succeeded by that of pity. Looking with great earnestness on the poor, half-naked object who sat by his side on the very edge of the burning embers, devouring his allowance of food, he could hardly restrain the tear that rushed into his eye.

“Here,” said Panormus, giving to Alvattes his rough outer garment, “the dew is falling, and you will have more need of this than I can have, before we have finished our journey.”

All previous ill feeling, if such had been indulged by the slave was instantly forgotten. His large bright eyes fixed themselves on his benefactor, and told the gratitude of his heart. Wrapping himself in the vestment, he started on his legs with great alacrity, and paced backwards and forwards at his utmost speed, as if to ascertain whether it would impede his progress.

Panormus having embraced his friend, Aristomenes turned towards Messene, and the little party commenced the journey before them. Euephnus, who had shown himself much displeased with the company of Aristomenes, was not perfectly satisfied when the young soldier had taken his leave. Turning frequently

to watch him, and exhibiting more clearly than was judicious, an irritable anxiety, he attracted the notice of Panormus. The slave, whose grotesque figure was made the more ridiculous by the garment in which he had wrapped himself, ran first in one direction, then in another ; at one time rubbing himself against Panormus, as a dog does against his master, and at another, starting on one side or the other, as if determined to make his escape. Euephnus, absorbed in his own reflections, and troubled by his fears, took no notice of the slave, but seemed as if he had almost forgotten the object for which the journey had been undertaken.

Panormus, left to his own thoughts, began to reason, for the first time, on the propriety of the step he had taken. His mind was not altogether free from a suspicion, that the motive of Euephnus, in leading him through the wild uncultivated country in which they were travelling, might be a selfish one, and that it would have been wise to have taken some precaution, before he had placed himself so completely in his power. He determined, however, to satisfy himself at once, whether he might confide in his honesty.

“What do you fear, man ?” he said, in a loud commanding voice, which startled Euephnus, and put him

in possession of his senses ; “ none but cowards and rogues have occasion to fear.”

“ If I have fear, Sir, I am both,” was the laconic reply of Euephnus, who pretended to be offended at the insinuation.

“ What is it then, that attracts so much of your attention in the rear of our progress, as to make you unconscious of the direction in which our guide is leading us ?”

“ True courage,” said Euephnus, “ does not forbid us to be cautious. The road over which we have passed, is so exposed, and on every side so open to assault, that nothing would have been easier than to have waylaid us, if the robbers had, by any chance, heard of our expedition, and felt inclined to face us.”

This answer, restored, in a great measure, the confidence of Panormus ; or, at least, it gave him the means of accounting for the conduct of his companion, without attributing it to either cowardice or roguery. But the Messenian could scarcely have avoided the thought, that, whatever danger there might have been of being waylaid on the road they had passed, there was much more on that before them. They were now entering a narrow defile, scarcely wide enough for the three tra-

vellers to walk abreast, had they been so inclined. The sides, though almost perpendicular, were in some parts, at a great height above the footpath, so indented, that broad projecting ledges were formed, extending on each side to a length sufficient to have formed a convenient place of attack for an army of soldiers. Here any persons might have placed themselves, and crushed the travellers, had they desired, without being in the least exposed to assault from below. Their condition would have been little preferable, had they been attacked, either in front or rear, by a force superior to their own. The slave kept close to his benefactor, but in the dark parts of the steep descent ran before, uttering a deep sepulchral groan, as if to direct the strangers, or caution them of danger. As they approached the termination of the defile, the sides became less precipitous, the pathway wider, and the road less rugged. An indistinct light also was seen at a distance, as when, after exploring the recesses of a cavern, you come near its entrance. In a few minutes afterwards, the travellers found themselves in a broad valley, bounded on every side by hills which seemed to support the framework of the heavens. Panormus was struck with the wild magnificence of the scene.

A narrow, but rapid, stream flowed through the centre of the valley, which appeared, at first sight, to be not much longer than it was wide; but after passing through it, another was observed beyond, a continuation of the first, although apparently separated by a projecting headland. To this others succeeded, each having a beauty or grandeur of its own.

When the fourth of this chain of valleys had been passed, the slave, who assumed for the first time, the office of guide, suddenly plunged into the river and waded across. Panormus, who had many reasons for feeling more confidence in him than in Euephnus followed. The Spartan, displeased with this deviation from the track he had intended, stood for a long time requesting, and then commanding their return; but they took no notice of either his entreaties or threats, and were nearly out of the reach of his voice before he followed, and it was then only by hard running that he was able to overtake his companions.

What passed between the Messenian and the slave when out of the hearing of Euephnus we do not know, but a few sentences attached the former more confidently than before to his guide. The slave still continued to lead, and kept up a constant trot, which sadly tried

the supleness of the Messenian's joints. From the place where they had crossed the river, the valley had perceptibly increased in width, and opened into a rich champaign country. The moon had nearly completed her course, and a few streaks of yellow and crimson light in the eastern horizon, foretold the approach of the radiant orb of day.

The travellers were coming very near a projecting mass of rocks, terminating the valley, and hiding a part of the extensive plain, from their view, when Euephnus, in a commanding, but low, tone of voice, desired his companions to stop, and be careful. The slave instantly obeyed, and stood as if fixed immovably to the ground. It was, however, but for a moment. Turning to Panormus, with a look, which seemed to enquire if he were willing to follow, he ran forward, with a velocity the Messenian could scarcely imitate.

"You ill shaped demon," shouted Euephnus, in a tone echoed from the hills; "you treacherous slave return."

Alvattes heeded not, but pursued his course with increased speed. He climbed with as much ease as would a squirrel the steep headland, and Panormus followed him with greater ease than might have been

expected, from one so little accustomed, to such an exercise. From the summit of the headland, the whole country was in view, and the youth was, for the first time, convinced of the extent of his danger, and his deep obligation to Alvattes, for crossing the river, and in fact, for saving him from his enemies, into whose hands he would otherwise have necessarily fallen. Beneath the shelter of the hill on the other side of the river, a large army had encamped; the flocks were feeding around, and the outposts, were pacing in silence from one station to another, as though engaged in actual service.

The morning sun was yet struggling with the dank vapours of night, striving to throw its genial rays aslant to earth. The soldiers were resting in their tents, and not a sound was heard but the watch-word of the sentinels. It was such a scene, as under other circumstances, and at a moment, when personal danger was not thought of, would have fastened the attention of even the impetuous Messenian. This, however, was not a time to indulge an admiration of the picturesque, for Euephnus, finding himself deceived, had re-crossed, with some danger, the impetuous stream, and reached the summit of the opposite headland, looking down on the encampment. The deep

blast of his trumpet, attracted the attention of the Messenian, whose senses were for a time, almost paralyzed by the perception of his danger, and the singular means of his escape. But the sound was well known to the Spartan host: in a moment, all was animation, and the hills resounded with martial sounds.

“I thank thee, Alvattes,” said the surprised youth, “but what is to be done?”

“Follow!” said the slave, “and fear not.”

The shouts of the disappointed Euephnus were now heard above all other sounds, directing the Spartan soldiers to the pursuit, although, even he could have but little prospect of overtaking the Messenian and his guide. The slave still led the way, and in a few moments, they were in the midst of a rugged mountainous country, so rapidly had they ascended and descended the precipitous paths of their perilous journey. They scrambled over the jagged peaks with the assistance of their knees, as well as their hands, and seating themselves on the summit of the declivities, seized upon every projecting mass of rock, to save themselves from being dashed to pieces by a sudden fall. This method of travelling, was not, evidently, new to Alvattes, for he seemed, if possible, to have a

greater rapidity of motion, among these untrodden wilds, than in the beaten tracks of the plain ; but the Messenian, who had never before been compelled to make a disorderly retreat, in such a country, was far less expert, and often compelled to detain his companion, though his anxiety to advance, was nothing less than that of the slave.

After a long and fatiguing flight, for we can hardly use the word journey, over hills, mountains, and valleys, they came to a vast chasm, the very sight of which, even at a distance, made Panormus dizzy. "There is now," he thought, "no possibility of escaping from the hands of my enemies, but by plunging myself headlong into this awful abyss, seeking death in the bowels of the earth, rather than submit to the taunts, sufferings, and perhaps death, which may in their turn be awarded in a Spartan camp." But as he approached the gaping fissure, undecided as to the course he should adopt, he observed that a narrow plank had been thrown over it, fastened on each side, with thick cords of hide.

"Cross this," said the slave, "and we are safe."

The chance of safety, however, seemed to Panormus nothing less than certain death, and to return was

equally dangerous, for his pursuers were at his very heels. The plank was not more than four or five inches wide; but while the Messenian advanced, undecided as to the course he should adopt, Alvattes crossed the dangerous bridge, and stood beckoning his companion with one hand, and holding a large knife in the other, ready to cut the strings which attached the slender plank to the opposite bank. The indecision of Panormus was painful in the extreme, yet his irresolution lasted but for a moment. He was not slow in his resolves, and resolute in execution. "The attempt must be made," he thought; "it is better to be dashed in pieces, and find a grave in the mountain torrent, than to be the dupe of treachery; it is honourable to die in the path of duty." While these considerations were passing through his mind, he was actually crossing the precarious bridge, which bent downwards and upwards with his weight, as he took step after step, with a timid caution. But, before he had fairly crossed, a Spartan soldier appeared, as if to dispute his passage, and rushing to the edge of the precipice, seized the unconscious slave, and with a sudden jerk threw him to some distance from the spot on which he was standing. Hope might now have forsaken the breast of

Panormus, but he determined to struggle for life. His foot was hardly on the solid ground, when the soldier seized him firmly by the throat, and in such a manner as to prevent him from drawing his sword. The result of this struggle would not have appeared doubtful to an observer, for although the Spartan was a more muscular man than his antagonist, and had an opportunity of choosing his grasp, before the Messenian had recovered from the exertions of his flight, or the anxiety attendant on the perilous passage across the ravine, Panormus had sufficient agility and skill to give him the advantage. Disengaging himself from the grasp of the soldier, he held him at bay, but without attempting to revenge the attack.

The slave was lying senseless from the blow he had received in his fall, and Panormus perceiving that his pursuers were on the very edge of the bridge, rushed forward to cut away the cords supporting that end of the plank on his own side of the precipice. The soldier perceiving his intention, made another effort to wrestle with him ; but in his attempt to grasp his person, seized on the loose garment over his shoulders. They stood on the very edge of the gulf, and the Messenian feeling certain that he could only save his own

life by sacrificing the intruder, instantly loosened his vestment, and at the same time, struck his antagonist so violent a blow, that he lost his balance and fell over the rock into the terrible abyss. A cold thrilling sensation passed through the frame of Panormus as the Spartan toppled headlong into his yawning grave. The opportunity of escaping, however, seemed to be almost lost, for his pursuers were on the bridge. He drew his sword, determined to sell his life or liberty as dearly as possible, by defending the pass. One after another fell beneath his sword, and were plunged into the torrent that roared at the bottom of the ravine. Hope sprang up in his breast; but a Spartan soldier, who was advancing to take the place of his slain companion, fearing that the same fate would be his own, took a violent leap, and alighted safely on a ridge of rock: others, encouraged by his success, followed, and in a few moments Panormus found himself surrounded by warriors.

The bridge being now undefended, the young hero must soon have been overpowered, but Alvattes recovering from the stunning effect of his fall, crawled to the edge of the precipice, and cutting the rope which supported the frail bridge, cast into the abyss all who

were on it: a groan was uttered as they felt the plank sinking beneath them, and nothing was then heard but the clashing of swords, and the loud curses of the Spartan soldiers, who were compelled to wait the issue of the unequal contest on the opposite side.

Panormus was still surrounded by enemies; but one after the other fell under his sword. Fixing his back against a rock, for his strength was failing from fatigue and loss of blood, he continued to defend himself, assisted, more effectively than he imagined, by Alvattes. Three only remained to oppose, and seeing that the bridge had been cut away, he determined still to resist to the last. All the combatants were seriously wounded, and Panormus hoped by separating his enemies, and fighting them singly, he might live to tell the tale in Messenia. Mustering his remaining strength, he made a sudden plunge at the man who was nearest him, and ran his sword through his body. But he was too weak to support this effort, and fell motionless covered with blood, on the body of the slain.

CHAPTER V.

‘ Sad news ! I feared the worst ! But now
Can scarcely credit what my fears foretold,
So give me proof.”

THREE days had passed, and Panormus had not returned to Ion. Helen, whose fears had been so much excited when he left his home, was now fully persuaded that her most gloomy anticipations had been realized : that he was the victim of treachery. Polycharès endeavoured to soothe her, by an assurance of the honesty of Euephnus, and the courage of her brother ; but all was in vain, no argument could dissuade her, or remove one of those gloomy apprehensions over which her heart brooded.

Aristomenes, who had more reason than Helen for entertaining the same opinion, was equally unsuccessful in all his attempts to subdue her alarm, and restore her equanimity of mind. He could not, however, but indulge the fear that his friend had fallen into the hands of the Spartans. Men had been sent out, though Helen knew it not, in every direction, to obtain, if possible, some information as to the path he had taken, or the fate that had befallen him; but they all returned without giving any information calculated to solve the mystery. Aristomenes, whose friendship for Panormus was not of recent growth, but had been sown in infancy, and nurtured in childhood and youth, was deeply anxious to ascertain the cause of his protracted absence; but he felt still more for the sorrow of Helen, and the distress in which the death of his friend would involve her and Polychares. Although he feared the worst, he still attempted to plant a hope in the bosom of Helen, almost dead in his own.

When the third night came, those persons who had at first expressed a confidence of his return, spoke with less certainty, and even hinted that it was strange he should be so long detained. Some thought he might have had occasion to travel to a greater distance

than was expected; some, that he had met with an accident, either in the course of his journey or in an affray with the Spartan banditti, of whom Euephnus had spoken; while others could not help confessing their gloomy anticipations, or positively asserting he had been the dupe of artifice, and was in the hands of his enemies.

Helen had been all the day restless, agitated by alternate hopes and fears. Of every one she met, some enquiries were made; but whether their replies strengthened her fear, or revived her hope, she could not altogether escape from the anticipation that she should meet her brother again, though satisfied she practised a self-delusion. As one who mourns the sudden removal of a near relative from a sphere of activity, would fain believe that the ghastly form of death is but a temporary suspension of the vital energy, and only gives up to despondency, and resigns hope when the beloved object is consigned to the tomb; so Helen attempted to sustain her mind. The evening returned, but Panormus had not arrived. The moon was again shining on the untroubled waters of the Messenian gulf, and the recollection of the hour in which he left his home, rushed into her mind, and forced the

unbidden tear. Polychares, her venerable father, attempted in vain to comfort her, and dispel her gloomy apprehensions; but his efforts only added to her grief. Seating herself on the balcony, she reviewed again and again all that had happened, and recounted in order the arguments that aided her fears. Her father stood by her with his arm around her neck, but she was unconscious of his tenderness, wrapt in the mystery of her grief.

“Mark there!” she said, suddenly rising from her seat, as her eye wandered over the beach.

“No doubt, no doubt,” said the old man; “how childish were your fears my daughter.”

The eyes of both were intently fixed on the object. It was seen in the distance, rapidly approaching, but it halted; and then returned a few steps as if some obstacle opposed, or as if undecided whether to go forward or return. It stopped, and Helen’s hopes died at that moment.

“It is not he,” said the beautiful girl; “he would not linger so near his home.”

As the person approached, it was quite evident that neither his stature or gait was such as could support the hope so unexpectedly raised, and so cruelly de-

stroyed. The indecision of the traveller was now still more apparent; at first he hesitated and turned, looking backward, as though he doubted whether he should proceed; and then, with a rapid pace, advanced to rebuke his delay. He now stood at the bottom of the marble steps leading to the portico, from which Helen and the aged Polychares were watching him, but he still appeared to doubt whether he should ascend, or those whom he wished to address should descend to him. But no sooner had he resolved, than with an astonishing celerity of motion, he seemed to be at once before the maiden, so that she had scarcely an opportunity of examining his person. Falling prostrate before her, he drew a close leathern helmet from beneath a thick garment, which covered him, and placing it at Helen's feet, said, in a deep and mournful tone of voice, "Alas! he is dead!"

Helen immediately recognized the cap, not only as one belonging to a Messenian soldier, but also as that worn by her brother, when he left his home. The feathers on the crest were stained with blood, and the helmet itself seemed to have been cut in a deadly struggle. Her fears were realized; but though she had anticipated the evil, she was not prepared to relin-

quish the possibility of his safety. Overcome with the mournful tidings, she would have fallen, had not Aristomenes, who at that moment joined the party, caught her in his arms.

Aristomenes knew the stranger to be the slave who had accompanied Euephnus and his friend. His first thought was, that the murderer might be before him, but his melancholy and haggard looks, the wounds with which his head and face were covered, and his present visit to Ino, at once quieted the ungenerous suspicion.

“By whom did he fall?” said the Messenian.

“By the hands of many Spartan soldiers,” the slave replied; “but by the order of Euephnus.”

“Then tell Euephnus, that if the gods grant, Aristomenes will meet, and reckon with him, let him go where he may.”

“It is not in my power to carry your message and return,” said Alvattes, “but I can aid the execution of your resolve, if I may follow you.”

“Then meet me at Ithome,” said the young soldier.

The slave nodded assent, and without making any reply, left the scene of this conference with as little ceremony as he had observed in introducing himself.

“Not so, Aristomenes,” said Helen, who was recovering from the effects produced by the sudden realization of her fears, and hearing an appointment, imagined its object; “I have lost my brother, and shall I part with you also?”

“I should be unworthy your confidence and love, Helen, if I permitted the murderer to stalk the soil of Greece to perpetrate fresh crimes. The time is now come when the Spartan nobles must know that there are those in Messenia in whose veins the blood of Hercules flows.”

“Let not your anger,” said Helen, “overstep the bounds of prudence. This base attack upon the life of my brother, and the honour of our house, must be avenged by the Messenian people. We are all of the same race, and whatever may be the jealousies and distinctions between us and the Spartans, the blood of Hercules cannot be spilt by the hand of treachery and be unrevenged, even by the Spartan senate.

Polychares, who had been insensible to all that had past, except that his son was slain, heard the last sentence, and rousing from his stupor, exclaimed, “Yes! yes! he was of the blood of Hercules; and I will have vengeance on his murderers or the senate of Sparta.

Oh ! my son ! my son ! I am thy avenger. I will burn towns, destroy flocks, slay nobles, to make thee a funeral pile worthy of thy name, and to give rest to thy wandering soul. Reach me my armour and sword, buckle on my helmet, and sound the trumpet. Up men, up ! I am your chief again. We will make them fly ; but there is no mercy. See how they skulk beneath the bushes ! Ha ! Ha ! Ha !”

A still more distressing calamity seemed now to be coming upon the maiden, which assuaged her present grief with the anticipation of a greater. She, who needed comfort, was compelled to administer it. With a delicacy of feeling, which those only who are suffering know how to practise, she subdued the rage, and soothed the excitement of her father. Like a child he sat listening to her council and resigning himself to the will of the gods.

Helen was not indifferent to that which gave both Aristomenes and Polychares so much anxiety. It was not, in her estimation, a matter of slight importance that the body of Panormus should be found, and that the accustomed ceremonies should be performed. But who should undertake the dangerous duty ? To part with either of those on whom it would with propriety

devolve, his father or his friend, she could not willingly consent. Aristomenes wished to make an immediate appeal to the council of Sparta, demanding the body of the Messenian, and the person of Euephnus; while at the same time, the authorities at Messene should make necessary search within their own territory for both.

“Not so,” said Polychares, listening with great earnestness to what had been said; “you are young and active, and your country is in greater need than ever of your services. I am an old man, worn out with fatigue, and grey hairs are on my head. You are the most dreaded foe of Sparta—I was. Panormus called you his friend—myself his father. What the Spartan council would refuse to justice, they will give in compassion to the tears and entreaties of an old man, who has been their faithful ally, as well as their dreaded foe. I will go to Sparta, and Helen—Helen will be protected in Messene.”

Aristomenes endeavoured by every argument that could be drawn from the recollection of Spartan intrigue, and from the indifference of the Lacedæmonians to all the charities of life, to persuade Polychares of the impropriety of his determination. But his arguments only increased the old man's resolution

to present himself before the senate of Sparta. The youth finding that he had no better effect upon the veteran than the wind when it attempted to rob the traveller of his cloak, still hoped that the tears and entreaties of Helen might prevail; but the resolve was too deeply grafted in the injured feelings of his heart, to suffer even the slightest blight from the warmth of her persuasion. The violence of passion, and the thirst of revenge, which at first threatened to unsettle the reason of the old soldier, were succeeded by a calm determination, which although, perhaps, not less powerfully aided by an anxiety to insure the execution of justice on those who had injured him in the person of his son, was more likely to effect his object and secure redress.

Aristomenes, defeated in his hope of detaining his aged friend, and of undertaking, personally, the necessary appeal to the authorities of the neighbouring state, returned to Messene, and communicated to the kings and principal magistrates, the resolution of Polychares to demand of the Spartan senate, the body of his son, and the person of the treacherous Euephnus. The news thus conveyed, soon found its way into the more quiet ranks of the people.

Little groups were formed here and there, to mourn over the misfortunes that had so suddenly overshadowed the house of the idolized Polychares. All the night long there was a constant hum of voices in the streets, as if some national misfortune had come upon the state. Although Panormus was irritable and hasty, he was universally loved for his urbanity, tenderheartedness, and bravery. The mothers pressed their babes to their breasts, and wept, while they deprecated the anger of the gods; the old men blessed him, and prayed for his aged father; the maidens talked of his noble, warlike person, and pitied Helen. The whole city was disquieted, and no one could tell whether he felt more sorrow for the loss of Panormus, or for the affliction of Polychares and Helen; or whether sorrow or revenge had the mastery; so varied were the feelings excited by the unexpected news.

The arrival of Polychares, when returning to his native city, after a successful war, was never waited for by the inhabitants of Messene with more anxiety than on this occasion. Many of the citizens entertained a doubt of the safety of the expedition, while others were confident Euephnus would be brought back in chains to the capital, following the corse of his victim. The

young soldiers called aloud for instant war, and their superiors wished themselves at the head of the troops, that they might revenge the wrongs of Messenia upon the cities of Lacedæmon. All the ordinary employments of the people, were, for a time, suspended, and the young and old wandered about the city, or collected in little groups upon Mount Ithome, to express their opinions of the policy which ought to be adopted by their rulers, so as to repay the treachery exercised towards one of the most beloved nobles of Messenia.

The city of Messene was built at the foot of Mount Ithome, and was surrounded by a huge stone wall, enclosing the mountain itself. At that early period of history, to which our tale refers, the Greeks were not unacquainted with the science of fortification. The salient, and re-entering angles of the wall, flanked by towers, presented as bold a front as the more perfect works of modern engineers. The Greeks had not any fixed rules by which to regulate the ground plans of their fortifications, nor indeed were such necessary, from the character of their arms, and their method of attack; but they well knew how to adopt those arrangements most advantageous for an obstinate defence. The walls of Messene were not less than one

hundred feet in height, and sixteen feet in thickness. Within these were placed engines for hurling stones over the parapets, and in the apertures might be seen those which threw darts and iron-pointed beams—the former being directed upwards like the modern mortar, the missile striking the object after performing a curvilinear path in the air; and the latter being adjusted point-blank against the enemy.

On the summit of Mount Ithome, which, as we have already stated, was within the walls, stood the temple of Jupiter. This noble structure was one of the earliest and most beautiful specimens of that architectural taste, destined in later ages, to rise into perpetual renown. It was constructed in the broad and majestic style, called Doric, so well suited to a sturdy and energetic race, but at the same time, presented all the graceful and imposing outline by which the most admired specimens were characterized in later ages. The ascent to the portico, which was supported by six marble columns without bases, consisted of thirteen steps formed from the same costly and beautiful material as the columns, and indeed, as the structure itself, though of a much darker colour. These steps were not placed on that end of the temple forming the

entrance, as in modern structures of a similar appearance, but were continued round the building, so that it appeared to be raised on a solid block of marble, beautifully cut into the form best suited to facilitate approach.

From the summit of Mount Ithome the spectator commanded a view of the entire kingdom of Messenia. Looking to the north, his eye carried him into the countries of Arcadia and Elis ; on the west and south, the sea bounded his view ; and on the east, the lofty chain of mountains, called Taygetus, hid from observation the kingdom of Lacedæmon, and formed a natural boundary between the two states. The loudest and sweetest herald of morning had soared high in the heavens, the sun had capped the loftiest peak of the mountains, and the whole population of Messene had, for once, hailed the rising sun. Some had watched during the night, and marked the first golden streak painted on the light clouds which hung over the east ; some had arisen as soon as the animation inspired by his beams was felt, but none dared to slumber longer than He on this eventful morning. For a few moments we will direct the attention of the reader to a little group, collected at this time, on the summit of

Mount Ithome, under the portico of the temple of Jupiter.

In the centre of a medley crowd of men, women, and children, stood a small party of old men, whose bold and fearless aspect, as well as their dress, proclaimed them not unused to the dangers of war. They wore the defence, or, as we should perhaps call it, the armour, common to the Messenians, when engaged in active service. The upper part of the person was defended by a thorax, not unlike the modern breast-plate, but protecting both the back and the front of the body. It was formed of two parts, united at the sides with buttons. The thoraces were sometimes made of metal, but those worn by the private soldiers, were composed of hemp, twisted into small cords, and when of sufficient thickness, were even a better protection than those constructed of metal. The legs were covered by an armour of brass or tin, one piece reaching from the knees upward; the greaves, which protected the legs, buttoning round the ancles. A suitable defence was also provided for the arms and the hands. A helmet completed the dress. This important piece of armour, was always made open in front; for the

Greeks never entered the field of battle with the face covered. It was not unfrequently formed of brass, and some of the more wealthy chiefs, were satisfied with nothing less than gold; but leather was the material of which they were commonly made. The helmet was surmounted with a crest of feathers, the size of the plume having some relation to the rank of the wearer.

The thick and clumsy armour worn by the veterans, gave them an appearance almost grotesque, though frightful. From the shoulder was suspended, by a thong of leather, an ample round buckler, from the centre of which projected a boss, terminating in a point. On the left side hung a broad and heavy sword, and in the right hand was held a short spear.

The principal personage in the group of which we have spoken, was an old veteran, dressed in the military costume. Epicides, for such was his name, had at an early age, entered the Messenian army, and by his bravery and good conduct, attracted the attention of Polychares, who had ever felt towards him the highest regard. He had twice saved the life of his chieftain, and still entertained for the father of Messenia the same romantic attachment, which had stimulated him

in youth. Epicides was a stout well made person, but old age had given him a stooping gait, although it had not much weakened his physical strength, or diminished his energy of mind. By a modern observer, he might have been mistaken for a sage politician, haranguing his constituents, or a petulant demagogue stirring up the people, with so much authority and freedom did he deliver his opinions. His delight, from being chosen as the companion of his general, had as much enthusiasm, as if he had been indifferent to the cause of the intended journey. But to have supposed him careless of that which afflicted Polychares, would have wronged the veteran; for among all the circumstances which gave him cause for exultation, none were so frequently repeated, as that of his having taught the young chief Panormus, the use of arms. The habits of youth frequently follow us through life, at least it was so with Epicides. Holding an inferior rank in the army of his country, he was never known to commit, or allow without reprimand, a breach of duty. In the company of his superiors, he so spared his words, that he might have been called taciturn, but with his equals in rank, practised a volubility only to be compared with his own conduct, under other circumstances.

Such was the worthy who had drawn around him a crowd of idlers, under the portico of the temple of Jupiter.

Epicides, had been endeavouring to explain to the people the cause of the misfortune which had come upon the house of Polychares, and the object of the mission in which he was to act a principal character. But this was no easy matter with the warrior, for, every sentence he uttered, having relation to the subject matter of his discourse, suggested to his mind a dozen tales, heard a thousand times before, by the youngest of his auditors. The old man had so completely entrapped himself in the recollection of his former glories, that he might have exhausted the patience of his hearers, before he had tired himself, had he not been warned of the approach of Polychares to the gates of the city.

Polychares had often entered Messenia, hailed by the shouts of the inhabitants. Such demonstrations of public feeling and respect, severely try the virtue and firmness of the man who is honoured with the approval of his countrymen. The warrior, who had been taught by observation that success is the only passport to fame, had borne these public displays

with a philosophical calmness, approaching to indifference, but he was not prepared for that expression of respect and esteem he was now to witness.

In the large square of the city, which was surrounded by temples, and public buildings, and decorated with statues and fountains, Euphaes, the elder of the Kings of Messenia, attended by Aristomenes, and the principal nobles of the country, waited to receive the distressed father. To the protection of his sovereign, Polychares delivered his daughter, and having paid the honour due from a subject to the supreme power, immediately mounted his charger to proceed on his mission. The veterans who had been appointed to attend him, followed. On every side there was a dense body of spectators, the centre of the street being kept open by a double rank of soldiers on each side, who, in their warlike attire, and with their spears in their hands, did honour to the afflicted chieftain. The citizens also greeted him with a mournful respect, and prayed the gods to protect him. As he approached the gates of the city, he was met by the priests, in the dresses of their office, and by them conducted without the walls.

Polychares had stood with an undaunted front against the enemies of his country, and for fifty years,

had led her troops;—he had met many of those who now honoured him, and the memory of his son, when he, as a stripling, and inflated with honours, made his first triumphal entrance into Messene; but this was an exhibition of feeling for which he was as little prepared, as unable to witness unmoved. The tears trickled down his cheeks as he passed through the crowd, and a sigh was the only return he could give for the oft repeated blessings he heard from every lip. Nor was it a small gratification to Polychares, when he had left the city, to find himself attended by Epicides and the other veterans who had been his companions in former days.

With long and minute accounts of dangers and exploits, hair-breadth escapes, and signal successes, Epicides endeavoured to wile away the time, and amuse his chief, as the little party journeyed to Sparta. But the grief of Polychares, for the loss of his son, could not be thus subdued. The recollection of the past at any other time, would have excited the generous pride of the chieftain, but his heart was now filled with sorrow.

CHAPTER VI.

She was a form of life and light,
That, seen, became a part of sight ;
And rose, where'er I turned mine eye,
The morning-star of memory !”

THE GIAOUR.

WE must now recal the attention of our readers to the young warrior, whom we left apparently slain in his encounter with the Spartan soldiers. Alvattes finding that those who had opposed Panormus, were mortally wounded and dying, seated himself by his side and raising the head of his apparently lifeless friend, wiped from the marble brow, the cold sweat which still bedewed the stiffened, and inanimate body. The slave,

conscious of his advantage in possessing a perfect knowledge of the wild, mountainous country, and in the speed of his flight, should it be required, gave little heed to the curses of the soldiers on the opposite side of the chasm; who had every reason to attribute to him the defeat of the treacherous plans in which he was to have acted a conspicuous part, and their own failure; as well as the death of many of their companions. Alvattes was regardless of their reproaches, and with the indifference which a consciousness of present security never fails to create, sat unmoved by the menaces they uttered, preparing, it seemed, to remove the body of Panormus, whose head was bathed in blood. The slave, who had attached himself with great earnestness to the young Messenian, for no other reason, as it appeared, than that he had been the object of his pity, if he were influenced at all by personal motives, carried him to the side of a stream that rushed down the mountain, and laved his forehead with cold water. There was, however, no sign of life, and Alvattes looked around for some means of personal safety. He rose, and after walking a little distance, returned and gazed again on the young warrior, as if he believed life must still linger in so noble a form.

As he stood anxiously observing the countenance of the Messenian, he was suddenly startled by a shout of triumph from the Spartans on the opposite side of the precipice. They had thrown one end of a long rope formed into a noose over the stump of a tree, growing on the precipice, near that spot where Panormus had struggled with the soldiers. Having fastened the other end to a rock on their own side of the chasm, a venturesome companion had succeeded, by clinging with his hands and legs to the tightened cord, in drawing himself over, as a sailor climbs the rigging of a vessel. Another rope had been attached to the lower end of the plank and carried to the opposite edge of the chasm by the adventurer; two or three followed, and they had succeeded in raising, and were in the act of fastening, the plank, when the Spartans, secure of Panormus and his guide, as they thought, raised that shout of joy which had alarmed Alvattes. The danger was pressing, and the slave perceiving that a moment's delay must place him in the power of those whose treacherous designs he had so lately almost frustrated, seized the cap of Panormus, and made a hasty retreat. In every direction he was sought, though with

little hope of success, for there were few, as the Spartans well knew, who were so thoroughly acquainted with this wild and mountainous region, and none who could venture in places where he walked with confidence. The reader is already aware that he succeeded in making his escape, and brought the disastrous news to Ino.

The body of Panormus was immediately found, and the soldiers, being unable to seize Alvattes, returned, carrying with them the slain and wounded. It was soon discovered that life was not altogether extinct in the Messenian warrior, and upon the arrival of the soldiers at the encampment he was placed under the charge of one who undertook the office of surgeon. His wounds were carefully washed, and when stripped of his bloody garments, the simple medicines then known, were administered. The great loss of blood, and the excitement he had suffered, were said to be the only causes which could in any way affect his life, for his wounds were not dangerous, and the policy of Sparta, in obtaining the person of a Messenian general, might yet be effected. It was hoped that Aristomenes, as the representative of the army, and the friend of Panormus, would appeal to the senate, and that he might then be detained under

some pretence. By securing the persons of the two most renowned generals, and throwing the army into confusion, Messenia would be an easy conquest, for a large portion of the country might be overrun by the Spartan armies before a general could be chosen to lead the Messenians to battle. The chance, also, of obtaining a friend in the newly-elected chief, the dispiriting effect upon the people of having lost their leaders, and the constant threat of sacrificing them, should opposition be made, were thought sufficient reasons to justify, in the mind of a Spartan, the treacherous and cowardly policy which had been adopted. These advantages, however, were not secured, for they did not obtain the person of Aristomenes, and the Messenians believed Panormus to be dead.

Day after day passed, and it was still uncertain whether Panormus could recover. The vital energies had been so much reduced that it was hardly probable the stamina of constitution would again give vigour to his noble frame. The respiration, and the beating pulse, were the only evidences of life. He remained for three days in the same position as he was placed, without the motion of a muscle, in a state of insensibility,

unconscious even of existence. The honours with which his past life had been crowned were now as nothing to him, and the future was not clouded by a single apprehension. He longed not for freedom, for he was not conscious that he was in the hands of his enemies. It is a problem which has never been demonstrated, according to the doctrine of some, whether it is better to live unconscious of all that is passing around you, insensible alike to pleasure or pain, or to enjoy and suffer as is the common lot of humanity. But why should we entertain this doubt? Can it be a question whether the animate or inanimate is preferable? or whether a mixed sensation of pain and pleasure, is not to be chosen in preference to absolute insensibility? Give me, says man, the sufferings of humanity to bear, if I may enjoy its pleasures too. Such were the thoughts of Panormus when he became conscious of existence; suffering returned, but with it hope, and all the delights which flow from external objects.

The first awakening of the young Messenian, was like to that of a man removed in a sound sleep to a foreign land. Every object was new. "Where am I?" he said, attempting to raise himself; "and how came I

here?" There was but one attendant in his tent, and she was a damsel dressed in the Messenian costume. "Art thou the red-handed sybil? Tell me, am I still on earth, or in the land of departed heroes? And who art thou? And where is my sister Helen? Where Polychares? Where Aristomenes? Tell me all, fair nymph."

The maiden startled at his voice, turned, and placing her finger on her mouth in token of confidence, and the necessity of his quiet, replied:—"Thou art still, Panormus, on earth, but not in Messenia; yet the gods have preserved thee to be her benefactor. You are in the midst of enemies, for you lie in a Spartan's tent, and are guarded by Spartan soldiers. Let not this trouble you, there are those here who love Messenia, and the house of Polychares, not less ardently than yourself, and in good time, you shall again lead her armies, and be her deliverer. Resign yourself to present circumstances, and all will end well; resist, and all will be lost."

"But tell me, sweet maid," said Panormus, "how came I here, and where am I?"

"You are," said Nausicaa, seating herself by his side, "in a Spartan encampment on the borders, and your person has been seized, under the hope of making

your country an easier conquest." She then related to him all that had happened since he had placed himself in the power of Euephnus, to the truth of which his returning memory gave, at every stage, sufficient witness.

"But tell more, dear maiden," said the young hero; "I know but half as yet. Who are you, to whom I am so much indebted?"

"I am Nausicaa," she replied, "and more you cannot know at present, except that I am one in whose hands you are safe, both for your own and your country's sake."

We cannot inform the reader what were the feelings with which Panormus listened to, and gazed upon, Nausicaa: they may have been admiration and love, for she was worthy of both. Her slight and graceful figure; her light and airy motion; the sparkling lustre of her bright black eye; the flowing ringlets, and the tender expression of her truly Grecian countenance, might have lighted a flame of love in a more insensible bosom than that of the young Panormus. To her also, he was indebted for life, and all the relief that could be given to his sufferings. She dressed his wounds, bathed his temples when burning with fever,

and prepared the cool refreshing draught when parched with thirst. She trod with a stealthy pace when he slept, and when he waked she sat by his side and cheered him with an expectation of future glory. The tear would sometimes start from her eye as she talked of Messenia, and with a hesitating and anxious look, she would tell him of the grief of Helen and the wrath of Aristomenes. Nausicaa was a creature of tenderness, and in every look her character was exhibited. The delicate symmetry of her person, and the cast of sympathising sorrow which overspread her beautiful countenance, were irresistible charms. But above all, the delicacy with which every little office of kindness was performed, the forethought with which every want was provided for, and the sympathetic tear which flowed for every pain, made impressions on the heart of Panormus which were not to be easily erased. To him the smile of Nausicaa was more dear than liberty itself; and even Messenia had fresh claims upon his councils and courage, because she was loved by Nausicaa. He loved Helen, Polychares and Aristomenes but he loved them the more because they were loved and admired by her. All objects and affections were tried by the same standard,—the estimation

in which they were held by Nausicaa. No period of life had ever been so pleasant to Panormus, as that he was spending as a prisoner in a Spartan camp. Sometimes he spared a thought for Helen, Polycharès, and Aristomenes, and a cloud of anxiety passed over his forehead, when he recollected the distresses of his unhappy country; but the smile of the maiden dispelled it, before it could gather into a threatening aspect. In the intervals of slumber, he watched her from one part to another of his tent, with an admiring eye and thoughts of love: she was his only solace, his only benefactor. The heart that would have burst at the thought of imprisonment, was softened into acquiescence, and even approval, and the hasty wayward temper, was exchanged for a docility that made those things pleasant, which, under other circumstances would have been more than burdensome. But these pleasures were soon to be exchanged for equally pungent sorrows.

Panormus was fast recovering his strength, and the object for which Nausicaa had been placed in charge of him was fully accomplished. To save the life of the young warrior could only be a matter of anxiety to his enemies, so far as he might assist them uncon-

sciously in the execution of that disgraceful policy by which they hoped to possess themselves of Messenia. There was now but little fear of his recovery, and the affection which had grown between the youth and maiden, might be even detrimental to the interests of Sparta.

The taper was dimly burning in the tent of Panormus, and the midnight watch had passed. He was alone, Nausicaa had left him before sun-set, and had not returned. Thoughts of the future crowded on his mind, and of all these, none were so painful as the necessity there would be of parting with the maiden. If the weakness would but linger, that he might still suffer, to enjoy the pleasure of relief from her hands, he could be happy, even in a foreign land. And yet he knew not who she was, or what she, a Messenian maid, should do in the enemies' camp; but he knew she loved him, and that was sufficient to inspire all his confidence. Yet, why had she left him now, only half recovered, as he would fain believe, and intrust him to the cruel mercy of the Spartans? Why did she not wait and secure his escape, that he might be her defender? Thus tortured with fearful anticipations, he rose and seated himself near the

door of his tent, to breathe a little resignation and repose, from the soft beauty of nature.

The moon was shining with a clear and chastened light, and it reminded him of the night when he left Ion in the company of Aristomenes. The prophecy of the red-handed sybil was now half fulfilled, and he had little hesitation in believing that the other part would be. The stars were shining with more than their common brightness, and the aurora was playing in fantastic gambols on the edge of the western horizon. Around him were the Spartan tents, and the sentries paced their rounds with slow and almost unheard step. The scene was surpassingly grand. The army occupied an extensive plain, perfectly surrounded with mountains lifting their summits to the very skies. The deep-toned torrent rushed down the steep, and with hurried pace sought out the stream which ran past the tent of Panormus. But the beauties of nature cannot dispel the grief of the heart, although they may for a moment drive it away. Panormus was delighted with the scene, but he was in the midst of a Spartan encampment, and Nausicaa was gone. Lost to all outward objects, in the varying thoughts which flitted in succession over his mind,

she seized his hand before he was conscious of her presence.

“Art thou here again, my love,” he said, clasping her to his breast; “leave me not any more; what can I do without thee?”

“It is not now, Panormus,” she said, gently drawing herself from his embrace, as if she would chide a liberty, and yet would willingly have wept on his bosom; “it is not now that you must indulge such feelings. When the sun rises in the east, which is already tinged with its golden beams, I leave you, perhaps for ever.”

“But what, Nausicaa, am I to do without thee?”

“Think for your country, and when the time comes, act.”

“But how can I act, shut up between mountains in the midst of my enemies? and what can my thoughts advantage my country, for to whom are they to be told?”

“The gods will give the opportunity, and you are not without those, even here, who can, and will, deliver you to Messenia when your aid will be most needed. I must away, the light begins to glimmer, and it would be ill that I should be missed.”

"Oh! stay awhile, Nausicaa, the day will not peep yet an hour. Tell me whither you go, and why?"

"I go to Messene, but why, I know not."

"Then why came you here among enemies? And why cannot I return with you?"

"I came, Panormus, to be your nurse, but not willingly; I return because I am equally unable to resist."

"Then will you not tell Aristomenes and Helen that I am here,—tell Messenia!—that I may be delivered."

"Aristomenes must know," she replied, "but none else."

"Then tell him I love you, that you are my heart, and that to his care I entrust you—tell him that you have nourished me in sickness,—and tell him"—

"I can tell him nothing, Panormus, and least of all, that I have seen you. Let not such thoughts occupy your mind, I have a father, and his will I must obey, but I can say no more. Give me a signet by which the report of him, who shall deliver it, may be believed, and it shall be entrusted to the hand of one who will not betray his charge."

"That," said Panormus, delivering his signet to Nausicaa, "is well known to Aristomenes. It belonged to my father's father, and was given to me by Helen.

Of all inanimate things, it is to me the most dear, and it is now in the possession of her, compared to whom, all things are worthless."

"And now, farewell," she replied, "I have already staid too long."

"Say not so, Nausicaa, the sun has not yet despatched his messenger rays. Tell me again that I shall be free and meet you in Messene."

"The gods only know, and may they preserve you ;—so Nausicaa prays. I go to serve Messenia, so I am told, and in serving her, shall I not have the blessing of Panormus? "

CHAPTER VII.

" I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion
I would have made them skip : I am old now.
And these same crosses spoil me."

KING LEAR.

THE arrival of Polychares in Sparta, was so unexpected an event, that the warlike inhabitants were not a little anxious to know the cause of his visit. The sorrowful countenance of the old man, and the singular appearance of his retinue, were sufficient to excite their curiosity; and to satisfy it, Epicides, who was well known to many of the citizens, was recognized as a former companion in arms, and acknowledged with all the politeness of which they were capable. But questions and intreaties were offered in vain, a formal

inclination of the head, and a solemn taciturnity were, in his estimation, all that could be expected by his quondam acquaintances on the one hand, and his general on the other. He belonged to that class of persons, who esteem themselves of first consideration in all things, and although he was never guilty of a breach of trust, frequently embarrassed his companions by attempting to support, what he considered their dignity and his own importance.

Lycurgus, the celebrated Spartan lawgiver, had not, at this time, been dead much more than a century, yet his singular institutions, had already produced an entire change in the habits and manners of the people. The distinction of rank was almost abolished, and the possession of wealth, so far from raising a man into estimation, as in the present day, was esteemed an evil, sufficiently great to demand the pity of a Spartan. That wealth has a most injurious influence on some minds, and may be made to pander to vices, seriously affecting the well being of society, cannot be denied; but it is equally certain, that it is frequently conducive to the happiness of the possessor, and casts impediments in the progress of misery and misfortune. Every state of society has its evils as well its benefits; but

these are more marked in a commercial country, than in any other. The legal security justly granted to property, puts into the power of fortune's favourites means of, and even authority for, the exercise of revenge and every base feeling, against those who with less success, or less roguery, chance to need their assistance. But the greatest evil is, in the permission it grants to a rich man, to assume the rank only due to genius, birth, and education.

Among those who entered the Lacedæmonian capital, there were some who had only met the Spartans in the field of battle. To them every object was new and interesting, but they were chiefly attracted by the customs of the people. The Spartans lived for their country, and war was their only employment. They wore a short and coarse woollen tunic, over which was thrown a mantle or cloak. Their sandals or shoes were made of red leather, and their caps, not much unlike, in shape, the half of an egg, were of the same material, and were usually tied with strings, which passed behind the ears, and fastened under the chin. The boys were running about the streets almost naked, and covered with the wounds and bruises received in their gymnastic and warlike exercises. Even the girls were

allowed to wrestle with each other in public, and the women wandered from place to place without employment, all the domestic duties being performed by slaves. The Helots, a people who were virtually in a state of slavery, but held an intermediate rank between the citizen and the domestic slave, were distinguished by their skin caps, and by their dejected appearance.

As the little cavalcade followed the course of the river Cnacion, they suddenly found themselves in Sparta. The Grecian cities were for the most part surrounded by fortifications, but the capital of Lacedæmon, though situated on an open plain, was not thus protected. Here and there, mounds of earth had been thrown up, and on these were stationed soldiers who kept a constant guard. Situated on the highest eminence, in almost the centre of the town, stood the citadel, and round it were built several sacred buildings. From this the whole city, if a collection of public buildings and domestic structures, placed without any regard to order can be so called, might be seen. It appeared to be surrounded by unimportant villages, among which had been erected some large and elegant structures. On the eastern boundary of the plain was seen the river

Eurotas, on the west the Cnacion, a rapid river, that took its rise in the Taygetus. To the south of Sparta the streams joined, but they were also connected some distance above the point where their waters united, by a canal, which enclosed a triangular spot of ground, called the Platinistas, a large space, shaded by plane trees, and appropriated to the youth as a place of exercise. Not far from this, and on the banks of the Cnacion, was the Hippodrome, or course for foot and horse races.

The city of Sparta contained many large and splendid public buildings. Following the course of the Cnacion, the Messenians passed the temples of Juno and of Bacchus, and advanced towards the forum, opposite to which stood the Persian portico, the senate-house of the guardians of the laws, and other buildings devoted to public purposes. The southern part of the city was occupied by the tribes of the Messoatæ, the Egidæ and the Pitanatæ; the village belonging to the tribe of the Limnatæ, was built in the northern district, and that of Cynosuræans in the western. But there was nothing in the architecture of any part of the capital to attract the attention of the Messenians, except the temples and places of public

resort, for the inhabitants did not appear to possess those conveniences which they themselves enjoyed in Messene and Andania.

The unfavourable impression made on the minds of the strangers by the appearance of the city was not erased, or even relieved by what they saw of the people. It required but little acuteness to discover that they deserved no confidence, and would abuse it if conferred. Among them theft was a virtue when undetected, and treachery a proof of talent. To appeal to such a people for the punishment of the crimes of perfidy and murder, would have been thought worse than useless by most persons, but the Messenians, who knew something of the peculiarities of their neighbours and kinsmen, and had not formed a high opinion of their character, were still unwilling to believe them capable of rejecting the appeal of one who had so often fought by their sides, and boasted of the same line of ancestry.

The government of Sparta was in many respects different from that adopted in neighbouring states. When Lycurgus, conscious that the despotic power exercised by the kings, during the heroic age, was productive of great public injury, attempted to distribute

political power, he did not fall into the error of investing it entirely in the hands of the people. A despotism is preferable to a democracy, but a mixed government is best suited to support the relations of society, and to secure a mild and moderate policy. Upon this principle the Spartan legislator acted. The hereditary honour and authority of the kings were therefore confirmed, and the interests of the nobles protected and extended. A permanent council or senate of twenty-eight chiefs was established, and to this assembly, over which the kings presided by virtue of their office, all important questions of national interest were proposed. To prevent the enactment of laws injurious to the nation, and framed for the advantage of the nobility only; a popular council called the Ephori, and consisting of five magistrates, was annually chosen. To these men was granted the power of controlling and superintending the administration of justice, and of preserving the spirit of the Spartan laws. They also had authority to summon and dissolve the public assemblies, of which there were two; one consisting of nine thousand, chosen from the inhabitants of the capital, and the latter of thirty thousand, elected from all parts of the country. The former were frequently

called together to deliberate on, and confirm or reject, the proposals of the senate, the latter only on special occasions; but the nobles retained the right of a prior deliberation, and even of deciding against such measures as they might consider to have an injurious tendency.

The day on which Polychares arrived in Sparta, was that appointed for the monthly meeting of the senate and the Ephori, when the former swore to maintain and observe the Spartan laws, and the latter to maintain the hereditary authority of the kings, and the rights of the nobles. Having communicated to the senate the object of his visit, Polychares was desired to attend the assembly at the forum, and prefer his claim.

The forum was a massive building, situated on a gentle elevation, commanding a view of almost the whole city. It was of that form on the plan sometimes called a double cross, and enclosed a large open area. One end was appropriated to the purposes of justice and religion, and consisted of three large apartments, two of which were temples, and the other a hall of judicature. The opposite end was also divided in the same manner, into three parts, one being used as a senate house, another as a treasury, and the third as a

prison. The space between these two distinct buildings was walled in, so as to make an apparent communication between them. A range of columns surrounded the interior, forming a colonnade used by the people when transacting the ordinary commercial engagements, which with the Spartans were almost confined to the sale and purchase of articles of food or dress. The open space afforded a convenient place of meeting for all popular assemblies. Viewing the exterior of the building in a direction, opposite to either of its principal fronts, it was a structure, of which Athens in all her glory, might have been proud. The enclosing wall of the open space was thrown a little back, so as to break the uniformity of a long extent of frontage, and cause a projecting wing at each end, the whole being surrounded by columns standing at a sufficient distance from the building, to form a convenient promenade, and to relieve with their projecting, and sharply cut entablatures, the even and heavy face of the main wall.

To this building, Polychares, attended by his guard, was directed, and at the entrance of the forum, was received by a body of Spartan soldiers, who conducted him to the senate house. We will leave Epicides and

his companions to plead the cause of justice with the citizens, while we attend the venerable father.

The room into which Polychares was ushered, was plainly furnished with a long table occupying the centre, and round it were benches on which the senators sat or reclined. At the end were seated the two Spartan kings, Polydorus and Theopompus, whose dress differed but little from that worn by the citizens. The Messenian was received with much apparent consideration, and all that respect with which among the early nations, and especially the Spartans, old age was treated.

"You are at liberty," said Polydorus, the elder of the kings, a man of almost Herculean size, but of generous countenance, "to state your claims on the justice of Sparta, before its senate, and we are most anxious to decide with fairness."

"Most noble chiefs," Polychares replied, "had I not known that virtue resides in Sparta, I should not have been a suppliant before you. The duty I owe to my country has sometimes compelled me to take arms among your enemies, but more frequently Messenia has aided your desires, and I, as her servant, have fought by your sides. But I come not to you as an honourable enemy,

or a faithful ally, but as a father, mourning over a lost son, who was the pride of his heart, and the glory of his country; but alas! has been treacherously murdered by an ungrateful Spartan." The old man then explained the circumstances under which Euephnus became his servant, the duplicity with which he acted to induce his son to follow a pretended band of robbers, and his perfidy in murdering him. "Are you men," he said, in closing his appeal, "loving justice? Are you Spartans, loving the laws of Lycurgus? Are you devout, loving the gods? Give me the body of my child, and let the murderer receive his reward from Messenia, which has been robbed of a warrior and a patriot."

"It seems good to me," said Polydorus, "that the demands of this noble Messenian should be granted. The senate knows that Euephnus long deserted his country, and has but now returned to the capital. Let the charges be proved to the judges, and if the accused be found guilty, let Messenia pass sentence."

"I think not thus," said Theopompus, "the senate has no power to decide on an act committed within the boundaries of Messenia. It is sufficient we should protect our own subjects, and those who require Spartan justice must acknowledge Spartan laws."

Euryleon, a chief of brutal aspect, and of fearful malignity, commended this advice. "It is not seemly," he said, "that an old man who has led his country's armies against Sparta, should seek redress from her senate. He tells us that Messenia is weak, and unable to punish the man who has destroyed its general; let the advantage be ours. To interfere in such a matter would not be to the honour, but greatly to the injury of Sparta."

With these sentiments the senators confessed themselves perfectly satisfied; and Polychares, perceiving that his demand would certainly be refused, determined, at all hazards, to assert the dignity of his country, and repel the insinuations of Euryleon.

"Polydorus! I thank you that you have an ear for the wrongs of a father, and are disposed to dispense justice, even to a Messenian. There are none others here, I fear, to whom I owe the same acknowledgment. The injury done to my feelings cannot be revenged by this enfeebled arm, but who is it that has the effrontery to throw contempt upon my country? Is Messenia weak and an easy conquest because she refers to your boasted justice, a crime committed on your borders, and by your countrymen and soldiers, instead of taking ven-

geance? We are all of one blood, but a hostile foot on Messenian soil, leaves no impress,—the spot on which it treads becomes a funereal pile.”

“Do you then bring us a challenge?” said the hasty Euryleon.

“I have brought no challenge from the Messenian senate,” Polychares replied; “but in my own name I challenge the virtue of Sparta.”

“Old man,” said Euryleon, “these taunts do not suit the dignity of the Spartan senate, and it is only respect for your gray hairs prevents me from demanding your just punishment.”

“Dignity!” said Polychares, in a tone which could not fail to convey to his audience the contempt in which he held them.

Although Polydorus found that he only was anxious to listen to the claim of the old warrior, he still urged the justice of the demand, and the honour of the senate in granting it. But Theopompus, Euryleon, and others, were equally anxious to protect Euephnus, who had, indeed, acted on their advice, and accomplished their wishes. “The Messenian has,” said one, “insulted the Spartan senate and people, and ought to be dismissed;” to which advice the council immediately gave

its consent. But the parental feelings which had directed Polychares to Sparta, were outraged, and demanded revenge.

“Ye are Spartans, not men; may the gods curse you, as I do. May the clements plot you mischief, and destroy your harvest; may you be childless, or your children hate you; may your slaves be your murderers, and the gods your enemies.” Thus venting his paroxysm of passion, he rushed out of the senate-house, and accompanied by his veterans, immediately commenced his journey to Messene.

The little cavalcade proceeded slowly through the streets of Sparta, and every eye was turned on the venerable Messenian. “All is not right,” said one, “Polychares is not pleased with his interview.” “If the senate has refused his request,” said another, “the Messenians will not readily forgive the insult.” “The senate has challenged the Messenians,” said a third, “and war is absolutely certain.”

In this way the Spartans were speculating on the probable result of the conference between the Messenian chief, and the Spartan council. . Epicides and his companions were at the same time urging their master forward, anxious to make the best of their journey to

Messene; their desire to get beyond the Spartan territory, being much increased by the effect already produced upon the mind of their chief, whose violent passion overstepped the bounds of reason. Epicides endeavoured to comfort him, and draw away the gloomy bias of his reflections by descriptions of his former campaigns, and of the triumphs he had won in conflict with the Spartan hosts. But he only fed the flame he desired to quench, and hastened the hour of extremity.

“Ah! how we made them fly,” said Polychares, who had listened with more than usual patience to his favourite’s stories; “they asked for mercy,—but they had murdered our sons.”

It was too evident from this remark, and the action with which it was accompanied, as well as his general deportment, that reason had been shaken on her throne, and his guard doubted whether they should be able to control him, and guide him to Messenia in safety. The travellers were approaching a village, situated on the high road from Sparta to Messene, and the news from the capital having preceded them, a little group of men and boys had collected together, both for the purpose of seeing the celebrated warrior, and of venting their national spite in derision.

“That is Sparta,” said Polychares ; “ we will enter in triumph ; I will away to the forum and take the senate, and you shall slay, and no mercy ; for they love not their sons.”

“ My noble master,” Epicides replied, “ that is the abode of Helots and slaves, unworthy of our swords. It will not be to your honour to lose the advantages we have gained, by attention to these ; let us turn towards the city.”

The artifice was successful, and the veteran led the little company through a bye path to avoid the possibility of a collision with the rude peasantry ; but they, finding that the Messenians had left the high road, and were attempting to pass unseen, collected in great numbers, and made their way towards that part of the lane where they would be sure to have an opportunity of gratifying their curiosity. This movement alarmed Epicides, who sent forward one of his companions to entreat them to return home and allow his master to pass without disturbance. But this message only settled the determination of the peasants to oppose the progress of the party, and to indulge a spiteful triumph over the misery of Polychares, and the misfortune of Messenia.

The road into which Epicides had brought his companions was not wide enough for more than one horseman; and the chief, fancying himself on a warlike expedition, insisted on leading his men. The appearance of the veterans would have been grotesque enough to an indifferent observer, but it was much more so to those who entertained towards them a strong national dislike, too frequently felt by neighbouring states. Old men who had fought the battles of their country—had borne all the hardships of war, and seen its horrors, were, as if trifling away a second childhood, playing the soldier. But this frolic, for such it would have appeared, was not to terminate with as little mischief as usually attends the pastimes of boyhood. After passing through the winding and narrow path, they suddenly came in view of the assembled peasantry, who raised a shout of triumph when they saw the Messenians.

“On! on! my brave fellows,” said the distracted Polychares, “conquer or die;” and drawing his sword, he urged his horse among the affrighted people, cutting down all who came within reach of his weapon. His attendants attempted in vain to restrain his fury; he pursued the flying, and disabled the resisting, as

though he had been fighting for the liberties of his country, and for his own life. The mob was thus soon dispersed, and Polychares looking with much satisfaction at the bodies of those whom he had slain, upbraided his companions with cowardice.

The danger of the Messenians was now pressing, and Epicides hastened the march, so as to cross the borders before they should be pursued by the Spartan soldiers, who, as he well knew, would take a summary vengeance for the slaughter of their countrymen, without considering the circumstances. Having disarmed Polychares, under a favourable pretence, he succeeded by various artifices to accelerate the journey, and crossed the border before night-fall. All fear of immediate personal danger was then removed, but although the soldiers had thus saved their chief from a violent and retributive death, they had sufficient knowledge of the Spartan character, to know, that the events of the day, would, in all probability, involve their country in a destructive and exterminating war.

To have seen the old warrior, the father of Messenia, enter the capital, might have touched the heart of an enemy. Having bound his brow with a wreath of laurel, and decorated himself with flowers, he dis-

mounted at the gate of the city, and danced through the streets, bowing to every one he met, and boasting of the manner in which he had slain the Spartans.

The news of his return, quickly spread through Messene, and Helen, attended by King Euphaes and the Queen, Aristomenes, the chiefs, and a multitude of the people, assembled at the forum to meet him. Helen threw herself upon his bosom, but she soon became conscious that she had lost her father as well as her brother. The populace stood amazed to see their beloved chief in such a state of mental imbecility, and listened with fear to the tale told by his companions.

CHAPTER VIII.

“ Prepare you, generals :
The enemy comes on in gallant show ;
Their bloody sign of battle is hung out,
And something to be done immediately.”

JULIUS CÆSAR.

It was but a few hours after the arrival of Polychares, that Euryleon, attended by a band of Spartan soldiers, entered the Messenian capital, and demanded an interview with the senate. The day was fast wearing away, and sorrow hung heavily on the hearts of the Messenians, who had witnessed, or heard of the distressing effect produced on the mind of Polychares, by the refusal of Sparta to grant his just claim for redress. Other feelings, however, were to supercede that of grief ;

and we should inadequately explain the circumstances that led to the rupture between the two countries, and the commencement of hostilities, if we were to pass over in silence the events with which that day closed on which Polychares entered Messene, bereaved of his son and of his reason.

It was customary among the Greeks, in an early period of their history, to give the messengers of a neighbouring or foreign state an immediate audience, when demanded. The Spartans had granted this to Polychares, and it could not therefore have been denied to them by the Messenians, had any desire to find an excuse existed among the principal chiefs.

The council being convened, and the kings having taken their seats, Euryleon was summoned. He was a rough hardy soldier, who had imbibed all the martial spirit of his age, unsoftened by learning or the arts, both of which had already produced some influence on the habits and characters of the Greeks. Proud of his country, ambitious, cruel, and delighting in war, he was an emissary in every respect suited for the present occasion.

Placing his sword on the table, Euryleon turned with a haughty and insulting attitude and manner, to king

Euphaes, and said: "Messenians! the gods judge between us! One Polychares, a noble, and a member of your senate, has sought from Sparta the person of Euephnus one of her chiefs, whom he charges with the murder of his son. This demand, was wisely and justly refused; but Polychares, to revenge himself, has on his return to Messene, barbarously slain many unsuspecting Spartan peasants. The senate demands that you will instantly deliver him into my hands, to be conducted into Sparta, and to be treated as the enormity of his crime demands. If you refuse, we declare war, and will leave neither man, woman, or child, within your territory."

Euphaes, in virtue of his office, was the first to reply: "Tell your chiefs, proud upstart, that the Messenians who have beaten Sparta in the field, are not to be frightened by her threats. The gods judge between us! for virtue is cherished in Messenia, though it has been long driven from Sparta. The noble Panormus, the son of Polychares, and the offspring of Hercules, has been murdered by a base coward, called Euephnus, whom you say is a Spartan noble. If it is war you want, every Spartan noble shall be, as he was, a cowherd to a Messenian. You have refused Poly-

chares the body of his son, and insulted us by giving protection to the murderer, and applauding the crime. You have driven the old man mad with grief, and he has slain in his anguish the crowd who sought to insult his misfortunes. I say, we will not give up Polychares, who has led the Messenians to battle, and beaten your bravest armies. Tell Sparta that Messenia defies her."

"It is not wise," said Androcles, the younger king, "to involve ourselves in a quarrel with Sparta. We are the weaker and must give way to the superior power. Polychares has committed a crime against the neighbouring state, and should be given up to the vengeance of his enemies. Besides, what is this old man to us; he has encouraged sedition in Messenia, and has drawn away the hearts of the people, to make Panormus king. It is well that Messenia is no longer troubled with the faction. I say, give up Polychares, and let him die."

"Sparta may so reward virtue," said Aristomenes, "but Messenia will not. Let the cowards who dare not meet the Spartans in the field, plead the cause of injustice, and the treacherous, who would sell their country, talk of a disgraceful peace. Give Polychares to the

mercy of the Spartans ! the people of Messene would rather fight for their fields, their homes, and their liberties, for it is these our enemies seek. Is it not enough that Panormus should be murdered on the border, but that Polychares must be slain in Sparta ? Not a lock of his hair shall be touched ! But that justice may be done between us, let the Amphictyons decide. But if you would have war, Euryleon, Messenia is ready, and my sword shall not enter its scabbard till it has met thine."

The dissolute Androcles, coldly supported by a few of the nobles, who had long evinced a desire to aid the ambitious motives of Sparta, still urged the necessity of pacific measures, and the giving up of Polychares to the vengeance of the Spartan senate. But all those, who possessed in any degree the confidence of the people, supported Euphaes and Aristomenes. Euryleon boasted loudly of the power of Sparta, and of the inevitable evils which must follow the refusal of his demand ; of his own prowess, and above all of his desire to meet the Messenian chief who had challenged him. The noisy expression of all these different opinions, made no small uproar in the council, each person enforcing his

sentiments, with a warmth that threatened to terminate, as these deliberative assemblies frequently did, in a recourse to arms.

While these disputes were raging in the senate-house, the people, who had been informed of the request made by Euryleon on behalf of Sparta, and of the conduct of Androcles, burned with indignation, and threatened to avenge themselves on the person of the Spartan and his attendants. This injudicious and unjust resolve was curbed by Aristomenes, whose high sense of national honour could not have permitted the slightest infringement of those laws, by which the person of a herald was protected among the early nations. The popular feeling, however, from the very restraint under which it was placed, increased in violence, threatening to destroy any object that should oppose its progress, if another channel should be opened. Androcles was the object on whom the fury of the populace was vented, as soon as it was known he had espoused the cause of Sparta. Threats were uttered by some, and equally violent thoughts were cherished by others. There were some, whose zeal outran their discretion, who openly proposed the immediate execution of vengeance; and there were

others who trusted some fortunate occurrence might give an opportunity of vesting the kingly power solely in the hands of the virtuous Euphaes; but all were ardently determined to maintain the dignity of Messenia against their ambitious neighbours, whether peace or war should be the termination of the quarrel.

A circumstance happened at this time, which led to important consequences. Androcles, inflamed with wine, and urged by his companions to withstand the irritated feelings of his countrymen, paraded the streets, and took some liberties with the Messenian women. The fair ones, on the present occasion, did not long need protectors, for in a few minutes the king's party was surrounded by armed citizens. The dispute was at first confined to words, but the hot-blooded Androcles having drawn his sword and wounded a citizen, a more fearful conflict ensued. His inebriated companions being altogether insufficient to cope with the body of armed men by whom he was assailed, compelled him to seek protection from his enemies; and demand obedience to the station and authority he had abused. But his cowardice and presumption only incensed the people. A young soldier, whose family had been deeply injured

by his vices, rushed forward and stabbed him to the heart. This was the signal for the indiscriminate slaughter of all his companions, and there were many so little satisfied with this act of vengeance, they would willingly have still further indulged their passion for revenge, by heaping indignities upon the bodies of the slain. The more moderate resisted this proposal, but none felt the slightest remorse for the execution of what they considered an act of retribution; but on the other hand, a pleasure increased by the consideration that they had prevented the possibility of disunion among their governors, and crushed a conspiracy calculated to produce most disastrous consequences.

The Messenians had at this time many reasons for the indulgence of a strong antipathy to Sparta. The ambitious projects of that state were already in some degree known, and those who directed the affairs of Messenia, were conscious that an opportunity of commencing a war would not be neglected. A noble, nearly connected with the interest of the state had been made the victim of a base treachery, to which the Spartan senate had been privy, as appeared from a variety of circumstances. The Messenians knew they were inferior in number and in discipline to their

enemies, and had other reasons for avoiding a war; but they were not willing to purchase peace by the forfeiture of their national liberties. The whole community was actuated by the same spirit, and almost every individual waited anxiously for the moment when some circumstance should show in what manner the exercise of his courage and resolution might support the fortunes of his country. Every one felt as though the issue depended on his own prudence or strength.

Immediately after the death of Androcles, the citizens who had in that violent act satisfied their revenge, and, as they considered, justly punished him for the personal indignities they had received, as well as for the treacherous advice he had offered to the council, returned to their homes, and an extraordinary stillness pervaded the city. Popular tumults are like waves of the sea which roll one after another, gathering strength from a hindrance of their undulations, till, bursting with tremendous force against an opposing object, they either dash it in pieces, or are themselves broken, and dissipate their force in a swelling foam. The acts of an enraged populace are never premeditated; all is done upon the impulse of the moment, and when the source

of discontent is removed, a more than natural calm follows. It is thus, that after suffering a paroxysm of pain, we have exquisite pleasure when it ceases, from the comparison of one state with another; a feeling so powerful, that it amounts to absolute delight of the highest character. Man is sometimes, and then always, powerfully influenced by extremes, but the cessation of a pain or pleasure never fails to produce, either sooner or later, a state of mind opposite to that before suffered or indulged.

The uproar had ceased, and night had thrown a temporary oblivion over the deed of blood, and banished the recollection from the breast of the murderers. Such a crime in our own country, and in our own day, even though committed under strong excitement and great provocation, would not remain unpunished; but such acts were, in all the Grecian states, at the period to which we refer, so common, that the perpetrators entertained no fear of personal injury. They were satisfied with the thought, that Androcles entertained treacherous designs against his country, and justified the deed by imagining the evils which might have attended their execution. The sound, and almost breathless repose of the city, was such as would have

led a stranger to suppose the inhabitants had forgotten the act, under the conviction of its having entirely prevented the expected war between the two countries.

But although the people were thus satisfied, their rulers could only consider past events, as the precursors of those calculated more deeply to affect the interests of the nation, either by confirming or destroying the national prosperity. Euphaes, who had already heard of the death of his colleague, sought Aristomenes at this still hour, to consult with him on the interests of Messenia, and the projects of Sparta, and at the same time, to indulge in the expression of his sorrow for the fate of Androcles, who, as he well knew, deserved death from his country, though the execution had been unexpectedly inflicted by his injured, indignant, and unauthorised subjects.

The villa, owned by Aristomenes, was situated on the side of Mount Ithome, commanding a view of the ocean and the intervening country. So clear was the night, and so brightly was the moon shining, that the smallest objects might have been seen at a considerable distance from the apartment in which the Messenian chiefs were sitting. The rich and beautiful flowers that hide their petals from the frown of dark-

ness, opened them to the sweet influences of the broad-orbed moon, and embraced the soft air, as though they would rob day of its charms, and lavish all their sweetness upon night. The subject of conversation between the two chieftains, was, as may be supposed, the events of the day, and the probable result of the Spartan policy. The sudden death of Androcles threw such a depth of gloomy reflection over their minds, as even the loveliness of nature could not wipe away; for although they knew him to be insolent and oppressive to the poor, a traitor to his country, and a coward in spirit, it was not possible to escape the feeling of pity, always aroused in the virtuous mind, even when vice meets its reward. Several of his companions had shared his fate, but there were still some among the nobles of Messenia to whom a suspicion of treachery was attached, as being friendly to Sparta for personal advantage: one especially, had given cause for this apprehension, by his frequent visits to the neighbouring state, and his absence from Messene, at a period when the condition of affairs between the two countries were threatening an immediate commencement of hostilities.

Such were the subjects of conversation between king

Euphaes and his friend on the memorable night preceding the commencement of the Messenian war. But while thus engaged in earnest conversation, they were startled by the approach of a hasty foot, and the sudden appearance of Alvattes. To Aristomenes he was a welcome visiter, for he believed him to be intimately acquainted with the policy of Sparta, and friendly to Messenia, and those who espoused her interests. Alvattes, however, as soon as he saw a stranger, drew back, and intimated that his message was for Aristomenes alone.

“Fear not,” the chief replied, “all that is important to me is fit for the ear of my sovereign. Euphaes loves his country for her own sake, and not for the power with which she has invested him.”

The slave fixing his eyes upon the young monarch, seemed to be reading in his countenance the internal working of his heart; and with a smile of satisfaction, instantly succeeded by an arch expression of conscious superiority, turned to Aristomenes, and placed in his hand the signet Panormus had given to Nausicaa.

“Where did you obtain this?” said Aristomenes, looking with amazement, first at the signet, and then at Alvattes.

“Do you know it?” the slave inquired.

“Yes! truly,” Aristomenes replied; “it belonged to Panormus, and was given him by his sister Helen. But why bring it to me, and at such an hour, to give a resurrection to my grief. Take it as thy own reward for he who wore it—

“Is alive!” said Alvattes.

“Alive!” said Aristomenes, indignantly; “saidst thou not to Helen he was dead? Didst thou not bring his gory helmet, and lay it at her feet?”

“He was as if dead, noble chief, but now lives. I have brought you, from his own hand, the pledge to my honesty and truth; and you shall see him again.”

“But when? why does he tarry? where is he?”

“Listen Aristomenes,” said the slave. “My words are few. Panormus is in the hands of his enemies and yours; but he is recovering of his wounds, and when opportunity offers, shall be released; that is my duty. The Spartans are on the borders, and while I speak, are preparing to enter Messenia. Mischief will be done before the sun rises, and you cannot thwart it; but when the moon regains her place in the heavens, meet me with a band of trusty soldiers on the plain near Ampheia.”

Without waiting for a reply, Alvattes, with his usual hastiness of manner and motion, left the apartment, as though his own judgment and honesty had been so established, as to give an authority to his wishes or commands. Euphaes looked with surprise upon his ridiculous person, and was only restrained from the indulgence of an unreasonable mirth, a fault into which Aristomenes himself had fallen, by the importance of his communications, the earnestness and apparent sincerity of his manners, and the confidence with which he delivered his commands.

“You have chosen a singular spy,” said Euphaes, as soon as the slave had departed. “Where did you enlist him in your service, and what confidence can you place in his story or predictions?”

“I can scarcely answer any of your questions,” Aristomenes replied; “I have not in any way solicited his confidence; and have some difficulty in making up my own mind, whether to credit or reject the strange news he has brought me. I saw him first with Euephnus, on that night when Panormus, warned by the gods, and by mortals, gave himself into the hands of Sparta; and I was with Helen when he brought her the news of her brother’s death. I am certainly prepossessed in

his favour, but cannot tell whether gratitude or revenge has secured his services on our behalf. Should he be found worthy of confidence, he has talents which may serve Messenia, and he will make his own opportunities."

"Will you, then," said Euphaes, "venture to keep the appointment he has made for you?"

"I do not foresee any danger in so doing," Aristomenes replied; "for although the Spartan troops, are no doubt in motion, and may even be, as some say, encamped on the borders, we may by proper precautions prevent the possibility of a surprise, and in the event of no more active employ, may reconnoitre the country, and ascertain the strength and probable movements of our enemies."

The preliminary arrangements being made, Gonippus was summoned to attend the chiefs, and receive instructions. This young chieftain, who has been already introduced to the reader, was of noble rank, brave, patriotic, and full of energy; the favourite and companion of both Euphaes and Aristomenes, who frequently intrusted him with the most secret duties of the state. He might have claimed an equal rank with the latter, being a member of the senate, and the

commander of a large body of troops, but with the frank generosity of his spirit, and a consciousness of Aristomenes' claims to his confidence, was always satisfied to act under his direction, and we might say, control. A lightness and jocularly of conversation, little under his own command, also unfitted him, as he thought, for those serious deliberations by which the destinies of his country were to be regulated.

"A pressing matter, Gonippus," said Aristomenes, "requires our attendance at this time to-morrow night on the plain before Ampheia, with a small band of tried men. From thence it may be necessary to advance to the border, and cross the mountains, to reconnoitre the position and strength of the Spartan troops."

"The gods grant," Gonippus replied, "we may meet the vagabond Spartan who sent me on my journey through the pitiless storm which destroyed the harvests of Messenia, with no other guide than a bandy-legged imp, who had dropt from the moon, with thighs as curved as her crescent."

"Some caution, good Gonippus, will be required in this business," said Euphaes, "for treachery may be intended."

"The fates grant then," he replied, "we may meet

with my crooked acquaintance. Mountain and valley, land and water, are the same to him; and he has such a pleasant knack of escorting his companions, man and beast, in light and darkness, you have nothing to do but to keep your saddle, and hold your peace."

"I believe, this acquaintance of yours," said Aristomenes, "has more to do with the proposed expedition than you can at present imagine:—whether for good or evil, must be proved. Confidence may be stretched till it breaks, and suspicion may wear out in using. Let us so blend the extremes as to give honour to the virtuous, and retain the power of punishing the wicked."

"Fear not," Gonippus replied, "I am sure he may be trusted, and such another guide you will not find in Greece. He can climb precipices, jump over chasms, see in the dark, and lead man and horse down perpendicular rocks with perfect safety. You may trust his honesty."

"To-morrow we shall test it," said Aristomenes, smiling. "Before the sun rises, move forward with five hundred true men towards Amphibia, and before he sets I will join you."

The events and result of this journey will be described in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Mad with success, and drunk with gore,
They drive the struggling foe before,
And ward on ward they win.
Unsparring was the vengeful sword,
And limbs were lepp'd and life-blood pour'd ;
The cry of death and conflict roar'd,
And fearful was the din.”

THE LORD OF THE ISLES.

ALTHOUGH Gonippus was esteemed by all his companions in arms for his merry and generous disposition, and perfect indifference to danger, he was not a latitudinarian in duty. Nothing could have induced him to deviate in the slightest degree, from the instructions he had received, or to have permitted an inferior to disobey his own commands. His courage, and prudence too, when engaged in the service of

his country, as much distinguished him as levity and mirth at all other times.

The sun had performed his daily journey, and the shades of evening were falling upon the plains; the last and lingering rays of light, tinged with a golden hue the summits of the distant mountains; but Aristomenes had not joined the exploring party as he had promised. The soldiers had been marching for several hours under the hope that he would immediately overtake them, and assume the command of the expedition. The disappointment hung heavily on their minds, not that they entertained any distrust of the courage and capacity of Gonippus, but the very name of Aristomenes acted as a charm upon the Messenian army; and to fail in an exploit directed by him, was, in the estimation of the troops, almost impossible. Troubles are increased when they are the fruits of disappointment, and for this reason the most sanguine are doomed to suffer the greatest amount of grief in their passage through life. Whether the soldiers had at this time any expectation of particular danger, or were merely dispirited by the bodily fatigue necessarily attending a long day's march, we know not; but they were more than usually depressed by the absence

of Aristomenes, and were anxious to delay their journey till his arrival. No argument, or fear, however, could induce Gonippus to listen to their proposal.

The company was not many miles from the plain on the edge of which Ampheia is situated, when Aristomenes, who had been for some time watching its progress, and examining the country, took the lead. His presence at once revived the energies of the men, and even Gonippus was delighted to resign the command into his hands. To prevent the possibility of surprise, scouts were sent in every direction, with strict orders not to lose sight of the main body, which, with a quick, but orderly step, marched forward, and with as much caution as could be expected from the number of men engaged in the service. Before midnight, they had encamped on the plain, not far distant from Ampheia; and were sheltered from view by a small but thick wood, through which a crystal stream flowed tardily.

All necessary precautions being taken for the protection of the encampment, should treachery be intended, Aristomenes followed for a short distance the course of the stream, revolving in his mind the probable object of Alvattes in demanding his pre-

sence. The night was calm, not a leaf was stirred by the soft, and almost motionless air, nor was a sound heard, except the gentle ripple of the water, and the plaintive moan of the frightened dove. The stars were shining brightly, and were here and there seen between the open branches of the thick forest trees. But the mind of the young hero, was not engaged by the soft beauties of nature,—he was waiting anxiously for the promised interview with the slave. “The hour for meeting,” he thought, “must surely be past; the moon has long since regained the place she had in the heavens, when Alvattes demanded my presence here.” Disquieting thoughts rose rapidly in his mind, and with them, determinations to detect the treachery of the slave. “If he should have deceived me! If he should be in the pay of Sparta! If he should impose on my credulity!” were exclamations to which he might have attached a resolution to inflict a suitable punishment when an hour more was past, without recollecting that should his fear be realized, it would be difficult to discover the resort of one, whose habits and motions were so inexplicable: but his reverie was broken by the appearance of the person he accused.

"It is well," said Alvattes, "that you are here. My information was correct, and my fears were not groundless. While I was speaking to you last night the Spartans were attacking yonder fortress. They have taken it, and slain man, woman, and child. The altars of the gods could not protect them; nor has one escaped to tell the tale of horror."

"If you have brought me, with the Messenian soldiers under my command to revenge this wrong, Alvattes, you have some cause to fear the result of practising upon our credulity. Ampheia is built on the summit of a rock, which has never been scaled by man, and never can be."

"We shall prove that to-night," Alvattes replied, earnestly, "if you are willing; but if you have already satisfied yourself, there is no further necessity for my presence."

"You might have, surely, found some more plausible story to cover your deceit," said Aristomenes, "for it is nothing less than impossible that the Spartans should have possessed themselves of so strong a citadel."

"They have," the slave replied, with an earnestness which might have been mistaken for passion, "and as

you doubt, follow me, and be convinced. But if you distrust me in this request also, choose as many of your followers as you will, to be our companions, and if they find no more fitting victims, I will be the sacrifice."

"I have no fear in the path of duty," said Aristomenes. "We will go alone. But pause before you mislead me, for your own life is certainly lost in the attempt."

The slave made no reply, but leading his companion through the wood, by a much less obstructed path than Aristomenes could have found, brought him to the very base of the mountain on the summit of which Ampheia stood. His doubts were then unfortunately removed, for the bodies of the slain were lying on the rock mangled by their fall from the fortress, from which they had been evidently thrown. The voice of the Spartan guards, who now paced round the walls of Ampheia were also heard, for some precaution had already been taken to prevent a surprise; though perceiving no possibility of an immediate attack, they had not adopted such means of protection and defence as would otherwise have been thought necessary.

Ampheia was, as the reader may gather from the

preceding pages, a strong citadel, built on the summit of a rock, rising perpendicularly from an extensive plain, and appeared quite inaccessible to an enemy, as the only perceptible means of approach, could be easily defended by the garrison, or citizens. In the time of peace, the strict discipline and watchfulness necessarily enforced in war, is always in some degree relaxed. It was thus at Ampheia; for the inhabitants, under a feeling of security, had withdrawn the guards from the walls, and neglected even those precautions which are at all times required for the protection of an important fortress. The city had therefore been taken by the Spartans without resistance; the unsuspecting inhabitants had been slain by the sword, and their bodies thrown over the walls, to rot beneath the meridian sun, or to be devoured by beasts and birds of prey.

Aristomenes, thus unwillingly convinced of the slave's veracity, and of the sad fate of the Ampheians, and perceiving the important advantage that would be gained by the Spartans at the very commencement of the war, should they be permitted to retain possession of the fortress, at once determined to make an effort to dispossess them; for another day,

as he well knew, would give them an opportunity of adopting such arrangements, as must enable them to resist every force that could be brought against them. They were now in a fancied security, altogether unprepared to meet a vigorous attack, and were scarcely protected from a surprise by the few sentinels who paced round the walls, exhausted with fatigue and previous excitement. These were the inducements which determined Aristomenes to attempt, even with this small force, the retaking of Amphibia, although the night was but little favourable to such an effort. To have returned to Messene with the sad news, and have left the Spartans in quiet possession of the citadel, would have been a disgrace to any warrior, and must have blighted the laurels of him whom his countrymen called the invincible. The difficulties to be encountered, and the advantages to be gained, were all considered;—and then turning from the scene of treachery and death, he again sought the wood where the Messenian soldiers had encamped, followed by Alvattes.

“I have done thee injustice, Alvattes,” said Aristomenes, “in suspecting thy intentions; but who could have imagined that Sparta would have debased

herself, by seeking such an advantage, or that with all her troops, she could have taken Amphibia! What are now your plans? What am I to do here?"

"Retake the citadel," Alvattes replied, "and give to the conquerors, the mercy they gave to the conquered."

"The attempt shall be made," said Aristomenes, "though I have little hope of effecting an entrance, unless you know some better mode than that of bursting the gates; the only means in my power of accomplishing the purpose."

"That would serve no purpose," said Alvattes, "select from your band five trusty and firm footed men, who may ascend the rock with us to the city wall; and let the remainder of your troop advance towards the gate of the city, protected from sight by the jutting rocks, and wait till they shall hear the sound of the trumpet; the gate will then open and they may enter."

"It is easy, Alvattes," the chieftain replied, "for our companions to occupy the road leading to the citadel, and even to advance to the gates, but how are we to scale perpendicular rocks, and who is to open the gates to Gonippus?"

"I live," said the slave, "to accomplish my own will, and that is, the mischief of Sparta; if you have no sympathy in my object, or still doubt my honesty and ability to perform what I have designed, return to Messene, for I can do my work alone; but time must not be wasted."

Such was the earnestness with which Alvattes thus addressed the Messenian general, that although it could not banish the fear of his inability to complete the manœuvre he had proposed, it did remove every suspicion of his dishonesty. Having no better scheme of his own, Aristomenes consented to follow the directions of the slave, and entrust himself, with five of his companions to his guidance. The circumstances which had happened, and the intended assault, were then confided to Epicides, as the most suitable messenger to king Euphaes, advising him as soon as possible, to summon a national council, to be attended also by the soldiers, for the purpose of determining what course should be adopted in the prosecution of the war, already commenced. Gonippus was then directed to proceed with great caution to the gates of Ampheia, and wait with the troops in ambush, until an opportunity should be given of entering the city.

Aristomenes and his companions, led by Alvattes, now commenced their arduous ascent to the walls of Ampheia. All the danger of the expedition, according to the guide, would be in reaching the base of the mountain unseen. This, however, was safely accomplished, and the adventurers immediately turned towards that part of the rocky eminence, where they would be hidden by the deep shadow which was cast by the slanting beams of the moon. After proceeding with a stealthy pace for some distance, they commenced the ascent, which to every one, excepting the guide, appeared almost impracticable. The Messenians even thought that Alvattes had chosen a part more difficult of approach than any other, for not only were the rocks steep, and in some parts almost perpendicular, but large blocks here and there jutted out, threatening to crush the adventurers by their fall. Aristomenes himself was not quite so certain, as he had been half an hour before, of the good intentions of the slave; but as he had accepted of his services, determined to follow at all hazards, resolving at the same time, that his punishment should be certain if he attempted to deceive or mislead him. The ease with which Alvattes climbed

the rocks, and overcame every impediment, would probably have prevented the execution of the latter resolution; for no sooner had it passed through the mind of the chieftain, than the guide, who had hitherto been only two or three paces before him, suddenly sprung forward, as if he had known his thoughts, and might have been in a few minutes beyond his reach. The little party, however, still cautiously ascended the steep acclivity, and reached a broad platform, at the end of which was seen the mouth of a cavern. The opening of this gallery was so small, that the adventurers were obliged to enter on their hands and knees, but had not proceeded far before the height was sufficiently increased to enable them to assume a more convenient posture. Groping their way through the dark chasm, they at last came near a dim light, which was found as they approached, to be the dying embers of a fire in a spacious natural apartment, decorated with pendant crystal drops, formed by the percolation of water through the rocky roof.

“Here we are safe from the sight and hearing of our enemies,” said Alvattes. “Let us rest awhile and take courage.” So saying, he threw several

pieces of dry wood on the fire, which almost instantly igniting, diffused a broad glare of light around the spacious amphitheatre. From every side the light was reflected, as if the apartment had been completely surrounded with mirrors, for it was formed of the purest crystal. The dazzling effect of the scene was almost magical. The flame of the fire darted perpendicularly upwards, and ten thousand images were seen on the apparently polished walls, reflected, and reflected again, increasing in distance, and diminishing in size. But the Messenians were still more surprised by a closer examination of the amphitheatre, for there were so many entrances, that it would have been impossible for any of them to have pointed out with certainty the one by which they had entered.

“Come,” said Alvattes, finding that his companions were forgetting the object of their journey in an admiration of the fairy vision, “let us move on. When you reach the walls of Ampheia, mount and possess your own. The blast of this trumpet will open the gates, and give you the assistance of your companions. But speak not a word, and tread cautiously, till you are within the city. When

Messenia wants me again, Aristomenes, you shall see me." Thus saying, he turned quickly round and entered one of the many galleries already mentioned. The soldiers followed him, as well as they could through the narrow aperture; but the rapid ascent, and quick pace of the guide, caused them some inconvenience as they groped their way one after another, not knowing what would be the termination of their strange journey. In a few minutes however, they were again beneath the broad canopy of the sky, sheltered by rocks sufficiently high to have defended them from the assault of the garrison.

A circuitous path brought the little party, everywhere defended by perpendicular rocks, to the foot of the walls which were easily scaled and without opposition. As the last of the soldiers ascended, Alvattes hurried towards the gates of the city, and a deep blast was heard which was echoed by the rocks far and near. The sound had scarcely died away when Aristomenes found himself surrounded by his little band of veterans, and in fact, master of the city. But that which had been the signal for the entrance of the Messenians, was one of alarm to the Spartans; who, roused

from the deep slumbers into which they had been sunk by their fatigue and excesses, seized again the swords still wet with the blood of the Ampheians, to meet a more potent foe.

The Messenians instantly formed themselves, with as much order as possible, for the attack, and rushed with great fury on their enemies, who, taken by surprise, offered but little resistance, and fell beneath the swords of the avengers. From one part of the city to another, they then wandered seeking their foes, and fighting with mortal hatred. In less than an hour, the greater number of the Spartans, who were at first much more numerous than their adversaries, were slain; but there was still to be a hard struggle before the fortunes of the combat could be decided. The few Spartans who had escaped the swords of the Messenians by a timely flight, or the security of their hiding places, gaining courage, had mustered together, and waited in an open space near the gates of the city, the attack of their enemies, who, roused with revenge, rushed on them with fury, and when once thrown into disorder, slew them almost without resistance.

“And have we met so soon, Euryleon?” said Aristomenes, fixing his eye on the Spartan leader.

“Would that the gods might fix the fate of our countries upon our combat. I am here, your adversary! The avenger of Polychares, the Ampheians, and Messenia.”

“Proud upstart,” Euryleon replied, “I will throw thy foul body to the beasts of prey. As I have done to the cowardly Ampheians so will I do to thee. Come, to it! Art thou afraid of words?”

This taunt was scarcely uttered, when the chieftians joined in a contest intended by both to be mortal. Aristomenes was, in real courage, agility, and the art of defence, more than a match for Euryleon, who was only remarkable for the ferocity of his disposition, and his great physical force. At the very onset, he pierced the Spartan's breast-plate, and not long after, wounded his sword arm. The envenomed spite of the disappointed and enraged chieftian increased with his prospect of defeat, and he sought to obtain by trick and cunning the advantage he could not command by skill. The relenting and benevolent mind of Aristomenes was thus, at every instant, excited afresh by a determination to punish his malignant and blood-thirsty foe. Another blow struck the sword from the hand of his enemy, and left him almost without a defence.

“If I were,” said Aristomenes, “to fall on thee and give no more mercy than thou hast given to my countrymen, Greece would applaud the deed. But there is more courage and honour in a Messenian than in a Spartan chief. Let the gods decide between us.”

Thus saying he threw away his sword and shield. Euryleon instantly flew at him as a tiger at his prey, and seized him by the waist with such force that he would have crushed his generous antagonist, had not the Messenian caught him by the throat. Both fell to the ground, and Euryleon was again in the power of Aristomenes, who having freed himself from his grasp, placed his knee upon the breast of his panting and terrified foe, and repeated in his ears the threats he had uttered in the capitol, and at the commencement of the fight. “Now seek,” he said, “the grave you have given to others and intended for me. I scorn to strike with hand or sword, so vile a creature as thou art in my imagination.” Thus saying, he raised the huge body of the Spartan, and hurled him over the wall.

During this combat the Messenian soldiers, irritated by a sensibility of personal and national wrongs, and

remembering the fate of Panormus, Polychares, and the Ampheians, gave no quarter to their adversaries. Every Spartan met with the same death as had, by their swords, overtaken the Ampheians.

CHAPTER X.

“ By those that deepest feel is ill exprest
The indistinctness of the suffering breast ;
Where thousand thoughts begin to end in one,
Which seeks from all the refuge found in none.”

CORSAIR.

THE reader has, perhaps, already suspected the fair Nausicaa of opening the gates of Ampheia to the Messenian soldiers. It was, indeed, she who had given her countrymen the opportunity of regaining the lost fortress, and made her own escape under the guidance of Alvattes. But there may, possibly, be some curiosity to know the circumstance which could have caused

such a confidence between Nausicaa and her guide, which we are bound to satisfy.

Alvattes was a slave, the slave of the maiden's father, and had attended her from her childhood, with a devotion rarely exhibited by a domestic. Nausicaa having lost her mother at an early age, had been left almost entirely dependant on the attention and protection of servants. He had carried her in his arms, when she was but an infant, over the mountains, led her to the side of the noisy waterfall, and lulled her to sleep on the sunny shore of the Ionian sea. He plucked for her nosegays of wild flowers, and twined round her brow garlands of acanthus. As she increased in years his devotion to her wishes were, if possible, augmented; or at least the familiarity indulged during her childhood gave way to a respectful deference, and an entire yielding of all his thoughts and actions to her will; for lost to every consideration of himself, he lived to perform the commands, and minister to the pleasures of Nausicaa.

This strong attachment of the slave to his young mistress was, perhaps, in part attributable to his deformity of person, by which he was almost entirely separated from society. Even those in the same con-

dition of slavery as himself, avoided his company, or only permitted him to join in their recreations that they might forget their own misfortunes in the presence of one who had more cause than themselves for sorrow. It cannot be denied that there is a strange and inexpressible pleasure mingled with the grief produced by the observation of distress; and of that, in particular, under which we have ourselves suffered. It is a satisfaction, though we can scarcely account for the fact, to know, that others feel the force of misfortune as well as ourselves; that we are not alone; and even, that there are some in a worse state, and have more reason to complain. The troubles arising from infirmity of body or mind, and not produced by the imprudence or vices of the sufferer, are the most common marks of derision, and those who have sympathy for distress and take pleasure in its alleviation, are not altogether free from the feeling of complacency engendered by a fancied superiority.

Alvattes, driven from the society of his fellow-men, and conscious that he was the object of their derision, might have become a misanthrope, and have indulged a feeling of revenge, which, if it once takes entire possession of the heart, never remains long without an

opportunity of gratification. From this unenviable state of mind the slave was rescued by the concentration of his affections upon Nausicaa. To please the pettish humour of the child, no sacrifice was too great, and no danger could prevent the execution of his plans. She was, it must be confessed, the only being for whom he felt a kind, or even generous regard, and the whole force of his naturally acute and active mind was directed to the one object of gratifying her wishes. She possessed a naturally hasty and impatient temper, but this, modified by an open, generous, and even benevolent disposition, could not disturb the calm, persevering determination of Alvattes. He perceived the failings in her character, and while he could exercise a degree of control, endeavoured to correct them, and from the influence he possessed, directed her passions when the affections were not deeply interested; but he, on the other hand, was entirely governed by her wishes.

Nausicaa had been accustomed from infancy to roam among the mountains; to listen to the roar of the rushing waters as they threw themselves over the rocky ledges, and to gaze on the aspiring pinnacle sometimes caped with snow; all her delights

indeed were gathered from the wildest and most rugged features of her native country. Accustomed to the sublimity of nature, and with a mind sensibly alive to all the magnificent images of a bold and majestic country, she imbibed a love of the wonderful and romantic. This, however, was not a morbid sensibility, but sprang from the power and energy of her affections, though directed by the habits and associations of childhood.

Nausicaa was well aware that by making her escape from Ampheia, and opening the gates of the city to the Messenians, she in fact sacrificed the Spartans. She loved her country, and had many reasons to hate and fear the Spartan leader; but a consciousness of the great loss of life which must attend the execution of her plans, made her often undecided as to the course she should pursue, and hesitate, even at the moment when they were to be put in execution. She had been brought unwillingly into the city, and her honour as well as her liberty had been threatened; circumstances which must have tended to strengthen her determination. Her father, who, though a Messenian, and holding a high station in the councils of his country, had been one of the

leaders in the attack on Ampheia, and had even encouraged the work of extermination, to cover his own guilt. Fearful of suspicion, he had secretly returned to Messene, as soon as the Spartans were in entire possession of the citadel, leaving his daughter in the charge of the base and brutal Euryleon, but at the same time by his absence, relieving her from the only motive, a fear of exposing his treachery, which could have prevented her from the execution of those designs, which, as the reader knows, were successful. Alvattes was the only individual in whom she could confide; and to his knowledge of persons and places, she was entirely indebted for the success of her plans.

But although Nausicaa had been able to restore a lost fortress to her unhappy country, and give an opportunity of prolonging the war, under more favourable circumstances, she had been altogether unmindful of her own safety. When leaving Ampheia, she thought for the first time of the uncertainty of her fate, and must at that critical moment have chosen her path, had not Alvattes appeared as a guide. Following him through a maze of dark passages and galleries, she found herself in

the subterranean amphitheatre through which Alvattes had not long before conducted the Messenian soldiers. The flickering light which occasionally illuminated the spacious hall, as the dying embers in the centre struggled for life, the vivid reflection of the flame from every surface, and the occasional indistinctness of the scene, impressed her mind with a feeling of superstitious awe, which she could not easily shake off. Her faithful slave, however, had provided for her comfort as far as it could be secured in this miserable, yet singular, asylum. A clear and blazing fire rose from the dying embers, and over her person he threw the large cloak, given to him by Panormus, to protect her from the damp atmosphere.

“Has all that I commanded you,” said Nausicaa, “been so done as to secure the success of Aristomenes?”

“All! fair lady,” the slave replied.

“But where is Panormus?”

“With the Spartan troops on the borders,” said Alvattes, “and an attempt at present to rescue him, would not only fail, but endanger his life.”

“Well, but my father! Tell me all that you know,

good Alvattes; wait not for questions," said Nausicaa, trembling with fear and anxiety.

"That body of the troops," Alvattes replied, "by whom you were brought beyond the border, when you left the tent of Panormus, advanced on Amphibia, and at night-fall took it, slaying all the inhabitants. Euryleon led one division, your father the other. As soon as the city was taken, Euryleon ordered you to be brought into his tent, but by secret means I secured your detention at the gate. I then hastened to the capitol and induced Aristomenes to meet me on the plain with five hundred men: at first he discredited and suspected me, but he will have confidence when I next need his assistance. Your father was in Messene before Aristomenes left it, and attempted to inform the garrison of the suspected surprise, but this I prevented. He is ready again to thwart the policy of his country; and his ambition is the more stirred by the death of Androcles, who might for a time have stood in the way of his advance."

The beautiful girl was agitated with the most intense emotions during the recital of her father's treachery; but hers was not a grief that gives way

to the turbulence of feeling, or that can be soothed by tears. She knew that her father was prepared to sacrifice any object to his ambition, and that her own safety, much less her honour, would not be considered. By placing Messenia in the hands of Sparta, he hoped to obtain the government, and with that anticipation, he was aiding the designs of this warlike state. Nausicaa had, however, been the means of saving her country from immediate thralldom, and hoped ultimately to liberate one of its most noble chieftains. The contrariety of feelings which agitated the bosom of the maiden, might have shaken the mind of a hero. To the will of her father she owed, and paid, as far as possible, the duty of a child, but she loved her country so much, as frequently to attempt the ruin of those schemes by which he plotted its overthrow. She loved Panormus also, though she scarcely dared to indulge the thought, and would have persuaded herself it was only patriotism that had created her interest in the young warrior.

Personal safety is one of the strongest feelings of the human breast, and yet in times of excessive danger, when the mind is led away by some pre-

dominant motive or passion, it is forgotten in the storm and tempest of excitement. Nausicaa was in disposition fearful and shy, but she had acted under the expectation of immediate danger, and now that new difficulties had sprung up, with but few, or at the worst, distant evils, she could scarcely avoid the recollection of her dependance or escape, the fear that she might suffer from the dangerous situation in which she had been by circumstances placed. But her confidence in Alvattes had not been shaken; she still felt a strong conviction that what could not be accomplished for her protection by force, would be attempted by design. Yet by what means could she return to her father? and where was he to be found? in Messenia or in Sparta? The battle was raging even by her side, and the fertile plains of Messenia might be at that moment overrun with Spartan soldiers.

“Oh! why am I,” she exclaimed, in a paroxysm of grief, “to be made the object of such varied sorrows? Why should I, a woman, have a treacherous father, a distressed country, an imprisoned friend, and be brought into the midst of war and blood-shed? Yet,” she said, in a more determined

and calmer tone, "if I should be able to preserve Panormus and my country, why should I complain? Go, Alvattes, Diana and the gods of Messenia have given us a task, which may yet be honourably performed, though difficult in execution. Go quickly! and watch the progress of the fight; let me know how the Messenians can avail themselves of an advantage, but especially watch the fate of Euryleon and Aristomenes."

The high, impassioned feelings which had so excited the maiden, gave way to the presence of sorrow, as soon as she found herself alone. The tenderness of the child overcame the determination of the patriot; the modesty and weakness of the woman rose superior to the high toned sensibility of public duty. Tear followed tear, and in a few moments she gave full vent to her bursting sorrow. There is a spring of affection in the bosom of a woman that can never be entirely dried up; it gushes forth afresh when the coldness of neglect might well have frozen the heart.

Nausicaa was aroused from this overwhelming grief by the return of Alvattes, who made his appearance with a singular confusion of manner.

"It is done! It is done!" he exclaimed, as he entered the cavern. "One enemy the less! it was nobly done! He is a god among men."

"How am I to understand this," said Nausicaa, "what is done? and who is a god among men?"

"Oh, he took him in his arms," said the slave, altogether unconscious of the questions that had been put to him, "and dashed him over the wall. I heard his armour rattle as he fell against the bare rock. It must have cut him deeper in soul to be so served by the man he taunted, than to have had his body so gashed by the fall."

"But who is all this about?" Nausicaa continued to ask, but the slave was entirely absorbed by the recollection of what he had seen.

"He is a true son of Hercules! He dashed him down as a thing he spurned."

"Of whom do you speak," said Nausicaa, hastily, grasping his arm with all her strength. "Why am I to wait in such anxiety for your information?"

"I saw Aristomenes," said the slave, only half roused from his reverie, "seize Euryleon in his arms, and cast him over the walls of Amphieia."

"Is he killed then?" Nausicaa inquired, with an

earnestness that showed she felt her own fate to be in some degree seriously connected with that of the Spartan leader.

“ If he was a man,” Alvattes replied, “ his armour must have pierced his heart, for the clang of it, as he fell, was like that of a brass-smith’s hammer.”

“ And how speeds the war ?”

“ Ampheia is re-taken” said the slave, “ There are but few Spartans within its walls, and they kneel for mercy.”

In the dark cavern of that rock on which Ampheia stood, we must for the present leave the beautiful Nausicaa, surrounded by dangers, and undecided as to the course she must adopt to escape them.

CHAPTER XI.

" Meanwhile the winged heralds, by command
Of sovereign power, with awful ceremony
And trumpet's sound, throughout the host proclaim
A solemn council forthwith to be held."

PARADISE LOST.

THE dreadful uproar that attended the desperate attempt of the Messenians to recover possession of Ampheia, the shouts of the victors, the clashing of shields, and the groans of the wounded and dying, had ceased before the break of day, and the victorious soldiers assembled in little groups to rest themselves from the fatigues they had suffered, and to forget, if possible, the horrors of the scene by which

they were surrounded. The hearts of the bravest seemed to tremble under the very sight of their own work, and like children terrified with a tale of horror, huddled together, not to defend each other but to support the dying spark of their courage. Man cannot look unmoved on the image of death; nor can the most insensible and cruel heart be indifferent to the sight of a place in which he has been one of the agents of human destruction, and especially when covered with the mangled and gory bodies of the slain.

The sun rose, dispelling the fears which crouched in the hearts of the bravest soldiers, as well as the direful influence of night upon sleeping nature, and spread an unusual splendour over the plains of Ampheia, tinging with a golden hue the extended and lofty chain of mountains separating the two states. During the hours of darkness, man had sacrificed his fellow man to the unhallowed passions, ambition and revenge, but the life-giver, the active agent of creative and supporting power, poured again its reviving rays upon the spot twice depopulated by the sword.

Hushed is the weapon's clang and ringing shield,
The thundering onset and the victor's shout :—

The battle's fought ; and o'er the warrior's corse,
The morning sun with strength renewed, pours forth
His life-reviving rays.

The rosy and yellow tints soon after the break of day assumed a more crimson hue, and the source of radiant heat and light presented its distorted form above the horizon. The merry heralds of morn soared aloft to catch the first glance of its full orb, and chaunted their Maker's praise in a chorus which roused all nature from its short but happy repose.

Gonippus and Aristomenes were, almost at the same moment, brought to the walls of the city by the expectation of deriving some enjoyment from the luxuriant scene. When the hours of night have been passed in a feverish excitement, the breath of the morning air, and the sight of animate and inanimate existence shaking off its slumber, revives and invigorates the spirits. How pure is that pleasure derived from nature ! Bound to the gaiety or business of a great city, the mind flags under the base objects of excitement, and mourns over the loss of happiness. The young warriors knew nothing of this feeling ; they were free to enjoy the pleasures of nature, and life with

them was full of physical and mental enjoyment; and when called to defend their country from the sword of the invader, their sorrow arose less from the necessity of action or personal fear, than from the misfortunes to be endured by their country, and by those unable to engage in personal conflict. On the past night the sword had been glutted with blood, and the streets of Ampheia were still covered with the bodies of the slain. It was, therefore, as the reader may well imagine, a more than ordinary relief to witness the reviving of nature under the genial beams of the resplendent orb of day.

When walking round the walls of Ampheia, the chieftians met.

“A fair morning, Gonippus,” said Aristomenes, “after an eventful night.”

“We have had a sharp struggle,” Gonippus replied, “but the Spartans have more cause for complaint than we, thanks to my friend of the mountains.”

“Has our loss been great?”

“Scarcely a man has been scratched. The soldiers were bewitched by bandy-leg or the pretty damsel, and fought shield to shield, like a moving wall, with swords at equal distances, until the Spartan line, hastily formed, was broken.”

"And now, pray tell me, my good friend," said Aristomenes, "how you obtained an entrance into the city, for the last man of my party had hardly scaled the wall when you made your appearance."

"The gods only can explain the particulars," said Gonippus; "the affair is much too mysterious for my comprehension. The troops ascended the mountain with a stealthy pace, and, according to order, advanced to the very gates of Ampheia. Hiding ourselves behind the rocks, we remained there a long time; and, to confess the truth, I had some uneasiness as to the result of the expedition. We were, however, at last, called from our hiding places by the sound of a trumpet, and to our utter amazement, the gates were thrown open by a beautiful female who, following my worthy friend, the slave of the mountains, escaped with a lightness of foot and an air of triumph which made us proud of having our entrance graced by such a prodigy of elegance and beauty. The drunken war-der met us but we quieted him without much violence, and instantly joined you and your companions."

"This account partly explains," said Aristomenes, "the reason why Alvattes separated me and my companions from the body of the troops. We had pre-

pared ourselves for a stout resistance but when we had mounted the wall there was no foe to oppose us. His object was evidently to give the lady an opportunity of escape, if near to the gates, and should she be too far distant for this, to leave in our hands your admittance; for the part of the wall we scaled was not many paces from the entrance towers. I would vow she is now hidden in the cave; but I wonder much who she can be, and what she has had to do with this enterprise. There are more interested in the fate of Messenia, good Gonippus, than we can imagine, and some, even in the very camp of Sparta."

"Alvattes! is that his name?" Gonippus exclaimed. "I begin to fancy those bandy-legs of his were made to carry more precious specimens of mortality than his own deformed person, over precipice and torrent."

The conversation was here stopped by the sound of a herald's trumpet at the gates of the city, and the announcement that a messenger had arrived from king Euphaes. He was a man past the middle age, but destitute of none of that noble personal appearance by which nearly all the Messenian nobles were distinguished. His robust and upright figure gave evidence of his physical strength, and his high and capacious

forehead was some indication of his mental superiority. But there was a deep, lowering aspect of his brow, and a broad sarcastic smile on his countenance, calculated to impress a stranger with some doubt of his honour and honesty. He was well-known to Aristomenes as a chief who had long been the friend and adviser of the unfortunate and vicious Androcles, and supposed to be in communication with, if not in the pay of Sparta. The young warrior could not, therefore, but feel surprised that Euphaes should have chosen him as a messenger at a time when the fate of the nation seemed to depend on the honesty, zeal, and discretion of its leaders. But he could not now allow any doubt arising from suspicion to withhold him from the path of duty, and indeed the frank and manly bearing of the messenger was calculated to quiet the fears of a more suspicious mind than that of our young hero.

“Most noble chief, whom Messenia and the gods bless,” said Chrysos, for such was the name of the person to whom the king had intrusted his command, “I bring the message of Euphaes, who greets you, always praying the gods on your behalf. Not doubting the success that has attended your arms, he has summoned a national council on the plains of Steny-

clara, and desires your attendance at mid-day, with as many of your followers as can be allowed to leave the fortress."

"It is well," said Aristomenes, "that so prudent a resolution has been so quickly taken, we will journey together. Gonippus will remain to command and protect the fortress in our absence."

This was not, in all probability, the arrangement which Chrysos would have recommended, but he expressed no objection, or evinced the slightest disappointment. The conversation immediately turned upon the events of the past night.

"All Messenia," said Chrysos, "will applaud the bravery that has retaken her strongest fortress; and now I have fulfilled the commission intrusted to me, let me, I pray, hear by what means you succeeded in regaining the citadel from the Spartan usurpers, and the events of the conquest."

"The tale is soon told," Aristomenes replied. "By an individual not unacquainted with the Spartan policy, I was induced to undertake the journey from Messene, almost without suspecting the object of my mission. By his assistance we obtained an entrance; and the result is, that not a Spartan

breathes in Ampheia, and I trust, not a man who is unprepared to thwart her policy and oppose her arms."

"Are all slain, then?" Chrysos inquired, with an anxiety that did not escape Gonippus, who was delighted to have an opportunity of examining the heart of the suspected chieftain.

"The mercy the Spartans gave, they have received," Gonippus replied. "They spared neither man, woman, or child, to tell of their barbarity; and now Sparta will need a messenger to hear of their punishment, unless a Messenian will undertake the office."

"Have, then, the swords of the Messenians, been turned upon the bosoms of unprotected, and unoffending women?"

"The extent of the wrong committed," said Gonippus, "has not equalled the baseness which put our enemies in our power. There was but one damsel within the walls; and think you it would have been mercy to have kept her to mourn over Euryleon?"

"Euryleon, saidst thou," Chrysos exclaimed, "and Nausicaa?"

"Nausicaa! was that the name of the lady fair. She was a blushing beauty, with fairy foot, dark eye,

that spoke eloquently, and tresses black as a raven's plume. Do you know her by description, Chrysos?"

The effect produced upon the mind of the suspected chief, by the raillery of Gonippus, strengthened the apprehension, that he was more deeply connected with the policy of Sparta, than had even been imagined by his countrymen. The journey which Aristomenes was to undertake in his company, was one of some danger, and vigilance was necessary to prevent the possibility of surprise. Accompanied by fifty of his followers, the young warrior left the fortress, but positively refused to take the road recommended by Chrysos, choosing a circuitous path in an open country. Whether treachery was intended on the present occasion, we know not, but nothing happened during the course of the journey further to excite the suspicion of Aristomenes.

The plains of Stenyclara, were, at an early hour, covered with armed men, all evincing the greatest possible excitement and anxiety to hear the result of the council. The news forwarded to the capital by Aristomenes, previous to the retaking of Ampheia, had been sent, with the order for a national council to every part of the country, and all the inhabitants

capable of bearing arms, were, in a few hours assembled to give their sanction, rather than to discuss the policy which might be proposed by the chiefs. Aristomenes and his party were the last to arrive. The news of his success had preceeded him, and he was hailed with the most rapturous exclamations of joy by his fellow countrymen. King Euphaes was seated on a temporary erection in the centre of the vast assembly, and Aristomenes, with his companions, took their places immediately around his person. The object of the council being described by the proclamation, Euphaes thus addressed the people.

“Messenians and countrymen,—The result of this war is not to be conjectured from its unfortunate beginning. We Messenians are less inured to arms than our enemies, but we shall acquire skill, and we have no lack of courage in pursuing those measures, by which we may defend ourselves justly. The gods, who are the protectors of innocence, will make our struggle for virtuous liberty prevail over the assaults of violence and ambition. Let us abandon the open country, and settle in those towns which are best fortified by nature, or by art. Confined in these strong holds, we may practice our-

selves in the use of arms, acquire martial vigour and discipline, and thus fit ourselves to compete with the enemy. If this counsel be approved, choose your abodes, and let each one so exercise himself, as if the independence of his country was to be decided by his own arm."

This wise proposal was received in silence by the Messenians, remembering their paternal fields, their wives, and their little ones. Their judgments, however, consented, though they waited for the opinion of Aristomenes, on whose advice they placed an implicit reliance. Euphaes was esteemed for his valour and clemency, but he was loved as the friend of Aristomenes. The young warrior, of whom a monarch with less zeal for his country might have been jealous, was on the present occasion, acknowledged with more than usual honour, for the burst of joy with which he had been received, was re-echoed from every side, when he told the gallant exploits of his soldiers, and exposed the false policy of Sparta. He urged his countrymen, by every inducement, to make a united and determined effort, and above all, to immediately adopt the policy recommended by Euphaes.

Leaving the plains of Stenyclara, each one sought

his home for the purpose of removing his family, and the things he thought most valuable, to some neighbouring fortress. Every protected city was crowded with inhabitants. The operations of husbandry, and the care of the flocks was left to the slaves, the citizens being entirely engaged in those pursuits best calculated to give them skill as well as courage in war. The men prepared themselves for combat, by wrestling, fencing, and martial exercises; the women cheered them with their presence and approval, and excited emulation in the breasts of the children.

The habits and character of the people, were now to undergo an entire change. The impetuosity and unrestrained vigour of the Messenians, had often obtained for them a victory over the most powerful enemies; but more frequently they had suffered defeat from a want of regularity in the application of these invaluable qualities. They were now to be schooled to discipline, a task at all times difficult, and especially so when it is necessary to support the spirits, and to keep the soldier ready for the field at any moment. War was to be their employment, not an occasional duty, interrupting the peaceful occupations of an agricultural people.

CHAPTER XII.

'Vex not his ghost : O, let him pass ! he hates him
'That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer."

SHAKESPEARE.

WE left the venerable Polychares at Messene, in a state of madness. By Helen's earnest request he was removed to Ino, and was there kept, as much as possible, from every source of excitement. The grief of Helen for the supposed death of her brother, had not been allayed by the lapse of time, before this equally heavy affliction came upon her ; but her sorrow for the past, was merged in an expectation of the future. From day to day she attended

the couch of her father, with an assiduity and tenderness, peculiar to a fond and confiding woman. Every pursuit was abandoned that did not administer to his comfort, and every hope was swallowed up in a desire for his restoration to health. During the day, she attempted to amuse him by withdrawing his mind from the all-engrossing sorrow, that corroded his heart; and in the hour of excitement and recollection, inculcated a resignation she was scarcely able to practise. During the night, she watched, by his side the change of symptoms in the disorder, and administered the simple medicines she thought necessary, or bathed his brow with cooling lotions. This incessant and sleepless attention to all the wants and fancies of a patient, whose disease still verged on insanity, soon made a striking alteration in the appearance of the beautiful maiden:—the eye was sunken and languid, a melancholy expression hung over her countenance, and she lost, overwhelmed with sorrow and fearful anticipation, much of that lofty independence of manner, at other times so characteristic.

For some time after the arrival of the chieftain at Ino, the hope of his recovery continued to increase.

The excitement under which he suffered diminished, the fever abated, and reason was partially restored. A prospect so cheering, was cherished with as much fondness by Helen, as if she was already certain of its realization. To conduct him to his favourite walks, to cheer him again with her voice and lyre, to recline on his bosom, and to repose under his protection, were the happy results already present in imagination. It was thus that she encouraged herself under every toil, and excited anticipations scarcely to be realized by the most favourable termination of the affliction under which Polycharès suffered.

Many of the sorrows of life arise from disappointment; and therefore, say some philosophers, it is unwise to expect. But can it be supposed that the happiness of any man is increased by a destitution of hope? Deprive human nature of that quality, and you leave it a dark waste of cold calculation; a cheerless blank, or a hell of ungoverned passion. Without hope there could be no inducement for exertion, and no pleasure in possession; yet it needs the curb of reason, or it will mislead and buoy up the spirits with fictitious pleasures, making the unhappy possessor the fitting prey of disappointment.

Helen had so pleased herself with a belief of the absolute certainty of her father's recovery, that when compelled to admit the probability of another result, she found herself altogether unprepared to support the present, and scarcely dared to anticipate the coming sorrow. The violent excitement under which Polycharès had suffered, was, in a great measure subdued, reason returned, and with it a more calm and resigned state of feeling, but he was left in such extreme weakness, that life appeared to be rapidly ebbing away. One spring of vitality was dried up after another, and Helen was at last driven to the belief, that her venerable father was fast sinking into the arms of death. Day after day, the certainty of his early removal was more established, for he became weaker and more composed, and was waiting, as it appeared to the careful watcher, for the hour of mortal struggle. Helen sat patiently by his side, and provided for every want, almost before it was felt. The dying warrior, gazed on her with a look of ardent affection, and often pressed her to his panting bosom, when the heart bursting with the thought, that he must leave her in a deceitful and fickle world, almost without a protector,

suppressed the power of speech. To restrain her feelings at such times, could scarcely have been expected of even the high-minded Helen; the heart knoweth its own bitterness, but it must sometimes give way to the outward expression of its sorrow.

As soon as the national council was dissolved, Aristomenes hastened to Ino, for the purpose of affording such protection as might be necessary to the afflicted and defenceless family. The sun was just rising when the young warrior arrived at the villa, where he had spent, under the almost parental control of the dying chieftain, and in the society of his imprisoned friend, the days of childhood and youth. A strange mixture of painful and pleasing recollections crowded on his mind as he approached the termination of his journey. Every scene was familiar to him, and connected in his memory with incidents that could never be forgotten by one so noble and grateful. But with whatever feelings he might at any other time, view these well known spots, where the lightsome hours of childhood had been spent in an unclouded sunshine, they now awakened the most painful of all feelings, the fear that the days of happiness and innocence were

past. Panormus, once his play-fellow and then his comrade in arms, was a prisoner in an enemy's tent; Polychares, who had watched and provided for him with the solicitude of a parent, he expected to find in a state of uncontrollable madness; and Helen, in whose welfare he was so deeply interested, must be, he was quite sure, the victim of sorrow. The only relief to the gloomy prospect was, the belief that Panormus would be liberated from his imprisonment, and assist in withstanding the arms, and baffling the policy, of Sparta. It is possible also, that he may have indulged a hope of claiming Helen as his bride, when the dangers of war were past, and the fields of his native land were again tenanted, by the industrious labourer.

When Aristomenes entered the place of sickness, the dying veteran was anxiously inquiring of Helen when the day would dawn. "I like not," he said, "the dim melancholy ray of the taper; I would not give my spirit to the gods in such an uncertain light. An old warrior should die when the sun is above the world." When he saw Aristomenes, he raised himself on his couch, and said, with much energy; "Thou art in time. my son : but the last hour is nigh.

Bear me to the window, and let me see the bright orb of day again, before I go hence."

Aristomenes immediately threw back the shutters, when such a flood of light poured into the room that Helen, startled by the glare, could scarcely persuade herself it was not a supernatural warning of her father's immediate death. The young warrior then removed Polychares on his couch, near to the window, from which, he had a view of the Messenian gulf, and of the sun just risen above the horizon. "Now let me sit up," he said; "I breathe more freely. A warrior should not die at night; it is like turning the back upon a noble enemy, or seeking defence under the shield of a foe."

For some minutes, the dying man gazed on the beautiful scene, and felt an inward strength infused by the sight of his native land, and the broad unruffled water, basking under the tenderest rays of the unclouded sun. Aristomenes supported him on one side, and Helen knelt by his couch on the other. But the slight excitement produced by his removal from one part of the room to another, and by a sight of that scene which none can look on unmoved, increased his weakness.

“My son,” said Polychares, turning to Aristomenes, “the gods have spared you to be the defence of Messenia, and the support of my house. When you were but a child, I stood by the death-bed of your father, who received a mortal blow on the plains of Stenyclara, in the defence of his country against the encroachment of Sparta. From him I received the charge of you, and not only promised that I would act towards you as a father, adopting you into my family, but also that you should be taught to love your country, and hold a sword in her defence. I have endeavoured to perform the intentions of your parent. Your father was a noble, closely allied to the throne, and you have justified his anticipations of your bravery and patriotism. But hear me, I am dying, and must now have a promise from you.” Here his voice faltered, and he fell back on the pillow exhausted. Life was on the wane, but the countenance of the noble chief was lighted with a smile of inexpressible satisfaction.

In a little time he recovered sufficiently to sit up, and taking the hand of Helen, gave it to Aristomenes. “Do you not love?” he said; “I know it; you are,” turning to the young hero, “her only protector, but,

yes, a father may say so, she deserves all the affection a noble spirit can yield to an undivided love. Receive my parting blessing!" And as they knelt by his side, he placed his hands upon their heads, and sobbed aloud.

"Oh! Panormus, my son! Is he indeed dead? I doubt. But why? The gods forewarn me that I shall precede him to their mansions. He lives! He lives! The inward sense predicting the future assures me he lives."

"I believe it," Aristomenes replied. "He will yet build up the house of Polychares."

"Oh, tempt not the hope which has so little life," said Helen. "Panormus was hurried to the shades before his time; and his ghost may yet wander over the spot that received his blood. Stir not again the sorrow that wept his rashness and his fate."

Polychares, unconscious of the tenour of these remarks, sunk into a partial slumber, and in a lower tone of voice, the conversation was continued.

"I would not, Helen, incautiously excite in your mind a delusive hope, nor endeavour to cheer the dying hour of your father, with a tale which he might find false, in the ghostly region where those

heroes are who fought round the walls of Troy. Be assured, Panormus lives, and will yet sustain the fortunes of Messenia."

"Oh! mock not my sorrows, Aristomenes, by thus raising a distant hope which time must disappoint. Did not the slave bring me his helmet torn in bloody strife, and bathed in his own blood?"

"It is true, Helen, but I have seen the slave again, and he has given to me a testimony that he yet lives, and though left by Alvattes as dead, after a combat with Euephnus or his followers, has recovered from his wounds, and will be liberated from the Spartan camp when opportunity is offered. Do you not remember the ring you gave him under a promise that he should send it if taken as a prisoner by his enemies, as a proof to you that he yet lived?"

"Well do I remember the day and the pledge. It was on the anniversary of the fall of Troy, when my father resigned the command of his followers, and invested Panormus with authority."

"Is not, then, this the token?" said Aristomenes, giving to her the signet.

"It is the same," Helen replied, "but I cannot believe from the mere possession of this, that he yet

lives. The slave may have obtained it from his finger after he had murdered him. Be cautious, Aristomenes, Spartan intrigue will overmatch Messenian valour. My hope is dead! My brother is gone, and my father is fast hastening to his last home."

"Think not ill of the slave," said Aristomenes, "he is truly attached to the interests of Messenia, and Panormus will, in good time, be assisted by him in recovering his freedom. It was he who informed me that Ampheia had been taken by the Spartans, and, with him as a guide, my brave soldiers recovered the fortress."

"Ampheia, taken and retaken!" said Polychares, who heard the last sentence. "The gods protect you—in conquest, in danger, in need. Panormus will come. There is a destiny in my house; it cannot be broken till its conditions are fulfilled. I go! I go!"

The clammy hand of death was indeed on him. The eye which once brightened with the recollection of conquest, was dull and lifeless; the muscles were relaxed; the cords of life, but now tuned to harmony, were unstrung and discordant. The pulse beat more and more slowly, the breathing became short and difficult, and a cold perspiration crept over him. "Aristomenes,—she is worthy—your love," he said, and died.

Although Helen had, in some degree, anticipated the scene she had just witnessed, she had not realized the solitary situation in which she was placed by the event. A few days since, she had enjoyed an uninterrupted round of pleasure, in the society of those most nearly connected to her by the bond of kindred, and her happiness was only disturbed by an anxious zeal for the welfare of her country. She was now deprived of both father and brother; and felt herself, even in the presence of Aristomenes, a solitary, unprotected being, in a country already invaded by an ambitious and unrelenting foe, and surrounded by difficulties scarcely to be overcome by human foresight, prudence, or valour. Seating herself by the body of her departed father, she gave way to the most violent grief, not that noisy sorrow which expends itself in physical exertion, but that deep, intense, grief of spirit which rends the heart, while it listens to the heavy pulsation, and the broken sigh.

“Helen, my love,” said Aristomenes, raising the distressed maiden from her seat and leading her to another apartment, “this deep uncontrolled sorrow will only increase the misfortunes which hang over us.”

“What other sorrow can come?” she replied; “the gods cannot take more than all.”

“Say not, my love, that they have taken all. Believe me, there is no doubt Panormus yet lives, and you have one friend, if Messenia itself were not your protector. None of these considerations, I know, can destroy your sorrow, but they may check its violence. You have lost your father, I the guardian of my youth, and Messenia its noblest patriot. The debt of nature must be paid, and those who survive must sorrow for the deceased; but let us trust the gods.”

In this way, Aristomenes endeavoured to check the grief of Helen, and with excessive delicacy attempted to restore her wonted confidence in his unceasing affection. Present grief obstructs the path of duty, and it is not until the edge is blunted that the mind is free to act upon the impulse of judgment. Helen was too well acquainted with the virtue of Aristomenes, and the depth of his affection to doubt for a moment the continuance of his attention, nor had she forgotten how closely the interests of Messenia were connected with his future destiny. She felt more than ever, the importance, for her country's sake of her influence over his mind, and determined to employ it in

the cause with which all her affections were identified, but was unable at once to restore the tranquillity of her mind.

Rousing herself from the lethargy of her sorrow, she rose to return to the apartment where the body of her father was lying. "Let me haste," she said, "and pay the expected tribute of respect to the ghost of Polychares, and satisfy the demands of the infernal gods ; lest he should say of me as the warlike Agamemnon said of his wife Clytæmnestra, ' my eyelids she did not close, and my limbs were not straightened.' I am, alas, the only one to perform these duties, but the gods will give me courage and fortitude."

The duties which now devolved on the broken-hearted maiden were such, as she could not avoid consistently with the requirements of her religious belief, and the supposed anticipation of the spirit of the departed. Accompanied by a female slave, she entered the apartment in which the venerable Polychares had resigned his life to the messenger of Pluto. She closed his eyes, and veiled his face, stretched out the stiffening limbs, and bathed them with water from the fountain ; anointed the body with a costly oint-

ment, wrapped it in the pallium he commonly wore, and over all, threw the richest dress of his order, a white enriched cloak,—the emblem of death,—a funeral robe, prepared by Helen, at the request of the deceased, for this solemn and mournful hour.

CHAPTER XIII.

"The sad procession by the horsemen led,
The thronging footmen in the rear succeed,
And in the midst, his friends, Patrocles bear."

HOMER.

As soon as the death of Polychares was known in the fortified cities and towns to which the Messenians had resorted for protection, Euphaes, and many of the nobles, repaired to Ino, for the purpose of assisting in the obsequies of the noble chief, who had by his virtue and courage gained the affection of his countrymen. The body was, according to custom, removed to the pronomium, almost immediately after the performance of those duties devolving on his distressed daughter, that all who

pleased might examine it; and his feet were turned outwards, to testify that when he next passed the gates, it would be by the aid of others, and that he would be unable to return. On the door-posts, locks of his snow-white hair were hung, and earthen vases of pure water were placed at the principal entrance of the house. A silver coin was put into the mouth of the corpse to pay the fare of Charon, the only waterman who was chartered to carry the ghosts of men over the gloomy river separating the human from the disembodied spirits; and in the right hand was fixed a cake of flour and honey, to appease the fury of grim Cerberus who keeps the portal of the stygian regions.

For three days the friends of the deceased watched, or rather attended, upon the corpse of Polychares, and performed the mournful rites they thought necessary for the quiet of his soul. In all ages, and by all ranks in society, these last duties have been attended to with a strict regard to custom or religion. When the object of affection is for ever removed from all sensibility to our acts of kindness, or neglect, the heart of the survivor dwells upon every virtue that exalted the character, and recalls

to mind, with painful sorrow, all those instances in which the wishes, or peculiarities, of the deceased had been neglected, by a stubborn regard to personal gratification, or an angry discontented spirit. Every failing and even vice, is so far forgotten, that the lost object of affection appears to recollection a perfect character, and the mourner so magnifies his own faults, as to believe that in all instances he has been the cause of every discontent, and charges himself with the sin of interrupting a course of continued enjoyment. Acting under the influence of these feelings, he is anxious to pay with devoted and even punctilious affection, the mournful rites which must for ever close the relations that had subsisted between the departed and himself.

The fourth morning came, and the solemnities of the funeral engaged the thoughts of all Messenia.

The sun never lighted a clearer firmament than on that day of sorrow, when Polychares was consigned to the shades by his weeping countrymen. The hills and the plains were decked in their liveliest hues, and the broad expanse of the Messenian gulph glittered with a radiance which vied in splendour with the beams of the great fountain of light. But

there was a melancholy stillness in the scene. The ripples of the water gently laved the broad beach, and murmured plaintively among the pebbles. The birds seemed to sing mournful airs, as they fluttered from tree to tree, and hailed the god of day. The children crept with stealthy pace from their homes to the scenes of their usually noisy gambols, as if afraid to tread rudely, and spoke in whispers. They roamed over the shelving beach and picked the brightest pebbles they could find, in lack of other engagements; or in the recesses of the woods, to gather flowers, which should be emblems of sorrow. The youth and old men collected together in small groups, all clothed in funeral garments, to talk of the sad occasion that had brought them to Ino. The scene was one which would have presented to the eye of a stranger, a singular contrast; one in which the animate and inanimate appeared to mock each other, so pleased was nature, so sorrowful was man.

The appointed hour of burial arrived, and the procession moved slowly towards the place where the funeral pile had been erected. The soldiers who had once called him their chief, walked first, with their spears turned downwards. The

corpse, preceded by King Euphaes, followed, borne by six of the oldest Messenian veterans on their bucklers, and supported on each side by Amphictyons, and the magistrates of Messenia, carrying torches. Aristomenes, although not related to the deceased chieftain, followed as the principal mourner, supporting the head. On the corpse were placed the warlike instruments with which Polychares had fought the battles of his country. All who claimed kindred to the deceased followed, and at some distance from these, his friends, the noblest citizens of Messenia. Crowds surrounded the procession and moved slowly forward in attendance. Not a voice was heard, all was still; and nothing but the slow and heavy footsteps of the soldiers, with which the people kept pace, broke upon the silence and gloom of the scene.

When the procession reached the pile which had been raised for the burning of the dead, the troops, with the multitudes of citizens who attended, surrounded the pyramid of wood, leaving an open space for the mourners and the corpse. The body being placed on it, sheep and oxen sacrificed to the gods, were laid round, and the coursers which the

deceased had driven in his chariot; the whole were then laved with honey and fragrant oils. Thrice round the pile, the soldiers marched in decent order, followed by the mourning friends; and thrice the trumpet's blast was heard, with such a dull, deadly sound, as struck deep terror into the breast of the multitude. Aristomenes then advanced towards the pyre with a torch in his hand, and setting fire to it, called upon the gods, Boreas and Zepherus, to grant their kindest airs to stir the languid flames, and unite the base material tabernacle to its kindred earth. The flame sprang upward, seeking its purest shrine, and in a few minutes the whole mass was in a blaze. The unclean body suffered a quick destruction, and the spirit, entirely separated, as the Messenians believed, from the inactive matter that bound it to earth, took its flight to the mansions of the gods. As the spectators retired from the immediate scene of the religious rite, and stood around to observe in solemn silence, a company of youths advanced, and walking round the blazing pyre, sang a plaintive song, expressive of the sorrow which had been entailed on Messenia, and entreating the favour of the gods

towards the ancient warrior. The soft sound of their voices was blended with the melancholy tones of the Phrygian flutes, which roused the most tender feelings of the listening audience, and prompted in every bosom a prayer to the infernal gods.

Aristomenes now stepped forward again to the edge of the pile, holding a cup of gold in his hand. From this he poured the choicest wines, libations to the manes of the dead, and called aloud upon the wandering ghost. The flames which had towered to the skies, at last expired, and nothing seemed to be left but a mass of glowing ashes. These he quenched with floods of wine, and advancing to the centre of the pyre, collected together the bones of the deceased, and a few of the ashes around them. Having washed them in the juice of grapes, and anointed them with precious oil, he deposited them in a golden urn, decked with garlands and flowers, which was carried by Euphaes. The young king taking the urn in his hand, the procession was again formed, and moved forward towards the Forum at Messene, in the centre of which it was interred. "Happy was Messenia," he said, as he deposited the urn in the tomb, "in the possession of such virtue as

belonged to the patriot Polychares, and thrice miserable are we, that the infernal gods should have envied men and hastened him away. Here will we erect a tomb, that Messenians may be prompted to deeds of valour, and on it shall be engraven, ‘Polychares, the father of Messenia.’”

It was thus, that the state bore testimony to the virtues of Polychares, upon whose spear and sword it had so often depended in the time of war. Thrice on the plains of Stenyclara, he had led his veteran troops against the Spartans, and driven them back with great loss, following them with war on their borders. This favoured son of Hercules owned no love so intense as that he felt for his country, and he had no enemies, but those who were the enemies of Messenia. His countrymen knew his worth, and their hatred to the Spartan name and nation, was increased by the indignities he had suffered, and by which his death had been hastened. Could they have been at this time led in sight of their enemies, no force, how superior soever in number and discipline, could have withstood the impetuous torrent of their excited courage and determination. It often happens that

intense feelings, suddenly called into existence, are short-lived, and decay as quickly as they grew; but it was not so with the Messenians, for they had suffered too deeply, and had too intense a feeling of their rights as citizens, to relapse into insensibility or indifference.

Helen parted with the remains of her honoured father at Ino, where she continued during the funereal ceremonies, attended by the queen and other females of rank, who sought to comfort her by exciting hopes for the future, and by allusions to the perfect happiness of her father's spirit in the world of departed heroes.

"Speak not of comfort," she said, "lest I curse the gods as men do in their grief. I will seek the darkest shades to court my sorrow; I will throw away ornaments and rich apparel, and listen only to the funereal dirge and the wailing of mourning women. Tell me not how to forget that I had a father and a brother, but how I may excite the grief I have in losing them."

Thus sorrowing over her loss, she felt but little when leaving Ino, under the protection of Aristomenes, who returned to the house of mourning

as soon as the ceremonies had been performed, although she was parting with her paternal estate, and all that brought sweet recollection of those she loved, for the gloomy restrictions of a citadel, to be, perhaps, in a few days surrounded by Spartan soldiers, and the scene of bloodshed and violence.

CHAPTER XIV.

‘Oh! tell me now my course! What friends have I?
Home have I none : and shelter is not nigh.
The gods alone can now direct me hence
And be at once my guide and my defence.’

WE left the fair Nausicaa in a cavern of that rock on which Amphelia was built. Alvattes left her there for the purpose of ascertaining with more particularity the events of the war, and of making some arrangements for the safe retreat of his young mistress. He was not long absent, and returned evidently disappointed, and in trouble. Nausicaa perceiving this, feared that the success of the Mes-

senians had not been so complete as the slave had at first supposed, or that some personal danger was to be anticipated by herself.

“What have you seen to disturb you thus?” Nausicaa inquired.

“He picks up new lives, as he loses the old ones,” said the slave. “I have seen Euryleon carefully selecting his path down the precipitous sides of the rock, as little injured by his fall, as if he were made of eider down. The life of that wretch is a curse to Messenia and to you; and his escape will give employment enough to the fatal sisters presently. But the sun is rising, and you must away before the Spartan army enters Messenia.”

“If the armies should meet,” Nausicaa, inquired, “will it not be possible to liberate Panormus?”

“The gods only know,” Alvattes replied; “but when the opportunity comes, it shall not be neglected. Where will you seek refuge?”

This was a question not easily answered. To place herself again under the protection of her father would be to expose herself to the brutality and insults of Euryleon; and even if she had resolved to adopt such a method of escaping her present perilous retreat,

it would have been difficult to have discovered his residence, and much more to have explained the circumstance of her escape from Ampheia. Nausicaa was also well aware that her parent did not entertain towards her a single spark of affection, and that he was only anxious to use her as a means of promoting his own ambitious views and interests. In Messenia she was altogether unknown, there was not a single female whose protection she could claim, for she had been brought up in the solitary retreat of a mountainous country, and her only friends were in Sparta. Under these circumstances she appeared to have but one resource, and that was, to return to the foes of her country ; and consequently resolved to seek protection from Archidamea, a priestess of Ceres, at Egila, by whom she had been often before entertained with much kindness and affection.

The journey was one which even a soldier would have thought dangerous, but to the enthusiastic maiden, it presented in prospect but few difficulties. Obstinacy of purpose, and capability of overcoming difficulties, are qualities of mind of a far higher order as possessed by women, than by men, though less loudly boasted of. Leaving the cave before

the break of day, the slave hastened his mistress forward, and anxious to escape observation, turned as quickly as possible towards the mountains, among which he had been so long accustomed to wander, we might also say, to dwell; presenting scenes which were, to Nausicaa as well as to himself, most pleasing, both from habit and a peculiar constitution of mind. Hastening forward to a rugged defile, which he had been in former times accustomed to visit, when he carried the maiden in his arms, he erected for her a temporary covering, so as to secure her a little necessary rest, for the performance of the remainder of her journey, and then seated himself by the side of a foaming torrent, hemmed in by precipitous rocks, and mused on the events which had already occurred, mingling his expectations of the future, with his remembrance of the past.

The wild and sombre aspect of the spot which Alvattes had chosen as the council hall of his reflections, was such as suited his temper of mind, as much as the offices he thought himself called upon to fill in the state. A broad sheet of water, the roar of which was music in his ear, projected itself from a towering precipice at the end of a deep

valley, stretching in separate declivities to the sea. The spot selected by Alvattes, commanded an extensive view of the mountainous country, and a rich basin on the Spartan side, through which a small but rapid river, formed by the accumulation of the mountain streams, was flowing.

In this wild, and as he thought, almost inaccessible region to all but himself, Alvattes felt secure from every interruption. The task which he had undertaken, was, that of delivering Messenia from the hand of Sparta, and the reader is already aware of the means by which he attempted to put his schemes into execution: it was an object worthy of the highest intellect, though but few would have considered themselves capable of carrying it into effect. The mind of Alvattes, however, was in some respects as deformed as his body. The practicability of a scheme was never thought of by him; everything was possible, and the only question he could indulge, was as to the persons best suited to undertake and perform it. The certainty that he ought to direct, and that all to whom he intrusted his plans should act without remonstrance, had, on more than one occasion, caused him to indulge a hasty

and even a rude and peremptory style of conversation with Aristomenes, when that warrior sought for some reason to justify his confidence in a person who had so few personal means of commanding attention. Such an individual must have possessed no ordinary self-complacency and esteem; and Alvattes was certainly not deficient in these qualities. The destiny of Messenia was in his hands; he was the master-spirit to direct and control the actions of others towards the end he proposed; and he had more claims to the assumed right than he imagined; for he considered himself a slave, and acted as such, except when influenced by the prevailing notion, that he was destined to support the independence of Messenia. It was fortunate for both himself and the country whose interest he espoused, that an early habit of obedience to the commands of Nausicaa, placed him under some control, or his interference might have been as fatal to the interests of the invaded country, as it was ultimately beneficial. His capacity of mind was equal to the decision of a serious question of state policy, but his unfortunate irritability of temper, and a long remembrance of real or

fancied offences, increased by a constant recollection of his deformed person, made him, at the best, a dangerous friend, and caused a constant fear in the mind of Nausicaa, that he would quarrel with those to whom he intrusted the execution of their designs. He was, however, a useful ally to Aristomenes, in the present state of the Messenian affairs.

The shades of evening were creeping over the mountains, and the solemn calm of the valley was only disturbed by the roar of the water-fall, and the murmur of the hurried and angry stream. Alvattes had waited for this hour to re-commence his journey to Egila, but before he disturbed his mistress, determined to reconnoitre the Spartan camp, and ascertain the movements of the enemy. For this purpose, he advanced towards that part of the mountain where the troops were encamped, his mind at the same time engaged in the consideration of some means by which he might thwart their designs. He had scarcely come in sight of their white tents, when he was startled by a heavy blow upon his shoulder, and an exclamation of recognition. He would probably have soon put the possibility of any further familiarity out of the reach of the

intruder by the best use of his legs, had not Gonipus seized him by the arm, for it was he who had thus accidentally met with the slave, having been sent, after the return of the council on the plains of Ampheia, to ascertain the number and condition of the enemy.

"My good friend," said the young soldier, "I owe you many thanks; do you remember conducting a man and horse over the border, that dismal night on which Euephnus stole the flocks of good old Polychares?"

"I conducted you," Alvattes replied, "and thank the gods who rendered you my aid, for few men are placed in so much danger as you were that night."

"By the gods I thought as much; so I owe you one good turn for that, and another for directing me to the gates of Ampheia, where my companions not only obtained an easy conquest over the Spartan soldiers, but had the honour of entrance by the hand of the loveliest sylph that the eye of man ever gazed on. I must be indebted to you for one thing more, and then say how I may show my obligation."

"You say you are already in my debt, and there is but one way in which you can repay me; that is, by asking me no questions."

"Nay, then, the third debt I wish to contract is just that which you deny. Come, come, we will say nothing about the lady, though I have dreamed of her ever since, but you may tell me something of the source of the danger I was in when you escorted me over rock and flood in the mountains."

"Let me settle in your mind one thing," said Alvattes; "the lady you saw is not yours, nor ever can be; she belongs to him who is your better, whom you have seen, do not see, but shall have as your master."

"Umph! that is a riddle worth solving, my pretty one. Where you are to find a better than Gonippus, is not for Gonippus to say, and master has he none, but that indefinite personage, his country. Has seen, cannot see, will have,—go on, I cannot guess, tell me, how I was in danger the night you led me over the border?"

"There may be some danger in doing that," said the slave, looking archly at his companion, "for Gonippus has a waggish tongue, though he has a sharp wit."

"You are the only man that may say so," Gonippus replied, endeavouring to hide the irritation he felt from

the well-timed rebuke, of the perfect justness of which he was not unconscious. "I have never"—

"Stay, stay," said Alvattes, "the times are strange, and caution alone can save us and Messenia. The night when I guided you over the mountains, was that on which the flocks of Polychares were stolen by Euephnus. It was he you saw at the hut where you would rashly have attempted to force an entrance, but from the certainty of unequal strength. The accustomed passes of the mountains were occupied by Spartan soldiers, and into their hands you must have fallen if I had not taken you by an unfrequented and dangerous road to the Messenian side. Panormus, listening to the specious tale of the treacherous Euephnus was, on the following night, unexpectedly surrounded by Spartan troops; but he, also, would have been saved, but from an unexpected opposition."

"I am indebted, then, to you for my life," Gonippus replied, "and it shall be devoted to the preservation of the liberties of that country for the sake of which you were induced to interfere on my behalf."

The night had now closed in, and Alvattes invited Gonippus to accompany him a little nearer to the Spartan encampment.

"You must again," said the slave, "place yourself in my hands, follow where I lead, stay where I direct, and return to Aristomenes with the haste you can, and deliver that message which circumstances may require."

So saying, he commenced a hazardous descent by the edge of the water-fall, into the valley; proceeding over an unbeaten path with a speed which sadly tried the patience of his companion, who followed at a very respectful distance, now and then giving way to a loud groan, which reaching the ear of his guide, induced him to moderate his pace. After proceeding in this way about two miles, they came to the opening of an extensive valley. The well-known pace of the sentry, the low, but distinct, recognition of the officers of the guard, as they passed from post to post, were recognized by the young soldier before he obtained a view of the encampment. Some thousands of armed men were here resting from the fatigues of a long march, and evidently prepared for the deadly work of war.

"Here stay till I return," said Alvattes, "and be ready to make your journey back to Ampheia."

Gonippus seated himself on the spot, and followed with an anxious eye, the grotesque figure of his guide.

He had scarcely proceeded more than a bow-shot when he was joined by a person who seemed to have been waiting for him, and with whom he remained for some time in earnest conversation. The indistinct light and the distance of the persons prevented Gonippus from knowing anything more of Alvattes' companion, than that he was much taller than the slave, and seemed to be a warrior.

"There is no time to be lost," said Alvattes, on his return to the Messenian; "this mighty host of Spartans are ready to carry fire and sword into the heart of Messenia. King Theopompus, Euryleon, and Euephnus, lead the three divisions, and in a few hours, will march towards your capital. Maddened by the loss of Ampheia, and the fate of Euryleon, no crime will be thought unworthy of a Spartan in the war. The troops of Messenia must meet this armed multitude, and stay its progress, for if the present opportunity be lost, Messenia will for ever be a Spartan province. Go, tell Aristomenes,—but stay, tell him what you have seen, but say not that you have seen me; I will return in time to direct the council."

Alvattes then explained to Gonippus, the shortest path by which to return to Ampheia, and himself

hastened back to the place where he had left Nausicaa. Overpowered by the exertion she had undergone, she still slept soundly in the tent he had provided for her. Rousing her from slumber, and furnishing a simple, but sufficient meal, he conducted her into the valley, where a horse was waiting for her, and before the day dawned, she found herself under the protection of her friend the priestess of Ceres.

CHAPTER XV.

" Mark you, how bright they shine who guide the war !

Mars on the first, in his own house, declares

Himself for us, while Saturn who delays

Each well plann'd scheme, defrauds the best desires

Of our proud foe ; and with the ocean's star

Destroys by love of ease."

THE ASTROLOGER.

IMMEDIATELY after the dissolution of the council on the plains of Ampheia, the entire population of Messenia sought a refuge in the fortresses or well protected cities, but had been suddenly called forth to take a part in the obsequies of the broken-hearted Polychares. As soon as the solemn ceremonies, already described, had been performed, they returned to their strong holds. The fertile plains of

Messenia were entirely deserted; the arts of peace were abandoned, and in every city the inhabitants devoted themselves to gymnastic and martial exercises. Those who were intended to take the field on foot, wrestled, shot the arrow, poised the lance, and fought with the falchion; while those who were mounted on horse, or in chariot, were taught to command the furious steed, and to use the appropriate weapons of warfare. Neither youth or old age were exempted; all who could carry arms were determined to defend the rights and freedom of their country or fall in their defence.

The state of society among the Messenians, previous to this period, had been similar to that which in modern Europe has been called the feudal system. The land was possessed by the nobles, and those who occupied it were their vassals, and trained to arms from their childhood, were bound to protect the possessions of their lord, and the liberties of the state. The resolution of the people to abandon the open country, to fortify their cities, and to cultivate the arts of war, was calculated to introduce an entirely new relation between the several classes of society; to break down those lines of demarca-

tion, which had before been a protection to all, and to establish the right of those to power, who possessed the largest share of wisdom or valour. Had the Messenian chiefs enjoyed less of the confidence and love of the people, the sudden change in the habits and conditions of society, by an indiscriminate mixture of ranks, might have been in itself sufficient to destroy the hope of final success against a powerful enemy. In turbulent periods, there are always forward and ignorant men, who are able, by pretended valour and wisdom, to raise themselves into distinction, and by attaching numbers to their interests, seek high distinctions, turning their hatred or arms against those who dispute their claims. The public energy thus diverted into a mean and filthy channel, can rarely be brought back into the pure stream of national glory, or should this be effected, its waters must be in some degree defiled. The Messenians were preserved from this evil by their implicit reliance on their chiefs, although some of them less deserved their confidence than they fondly imagined.

The Spartans finding that the Messenians had left their fields undefended, crossed the border,

destroyed their harvests, burned their huts, and utterly consumed every relic of cultivation. The Messenian youth watched the invaders from their strong holds, and guided by patriotism and an anxious desire to revenge the depredation, entreated their chieftains to lead them against the enemy. But Euphaes and Aristomenes too well knew the inferiority of their countrymen in the discipline of war, to permit an engagement between the opposing armies. To accustom their dependents to the duties they would ultimately have to perform, small parties were occasionally formed, usually under the command of Aristomenes, to check the Spartan confidence; and many of the enemies fell before the impetuosity of their attacks. From the walls of their citadels, also, they hurled the javelin on the foe, who, surrounding them, attempted to obtain possession by stratagem or force.

But as the youths advanced in skill and courage their anxiety to engage in open warfare increased; the chiefs were so earnestly entreated to lead them into the presence of the enemy, that it was at last almost impossible to turn the torrent of their passion, and avoid a conflict. Small parties of the

boldest warriors, were formed for predatory expeditions, to ravage the sea-coasts of Laconia. It was on the return of one of these that Euphaes called to his council Aristomenes and Gonippus, to consult on the propriety of taking the field against the Spartan army.

The watch had been stationed round the towers of Ampheia, and the inhabitants of the fortress had retired to rest, confident of the vigilance of their guard, when the king with his two friends repaired to an apartment of a mansion, appropriated as the temporary palace of Euphaes. The building itself, like the other houses in the fortress, consisted of but one floor, the domestic and sleeping apartments being separated from each other by long and wide corridors. In the centre of the building, however, a tower had been erected, from which an extensive view of the surrounding plains could be obtained. To this the chiefs repaired, not only that they might be more retired, but to obtain a view of the guards pacing round the walls of the town, and to enjoy the luxuriant beauties of a summer's night.

"Here is a scene," said Euphaes, "which might soften our passions, were there not causes to brace

up our revenge. The hosts of heaven, and the soft breezes, waste their blessed influence on our unhappy country, while the Spartan armies possess our patrimony."

The young moon was sinking to her rest among a multitude of stars, mingling her silvery light with the varied hues of the distant suns. The soft tint of the ethereal, finely contrasted with the brilliancy of the stars, fixed as it were in the depth of the celestial blue. Ten thousand glories were above, and increased the charms of the scene upon which they spent their rays. From a height considerably above the plain, the chiefs viewed a vast extent of country. Towards the east they saw a gently undulating upland, smoothly turned hills, throwing their dark edged shadows over intervening valleys upon the opposing mountains: in the west, a narrow, but impetuous stream, turned back to heaven the soft beams of night, as though its pointed waves disdained to receive from the celestial luminaries, a brilliancy not their own, emitting a softer luminosity as the swan floated down the stream, and the winds ruffled its ever varying surface.

Far beyond the flowing stream was the Spartan

army, encamped on the verge of the plain. The white tents, indistinctly seen, gave to the spot an appearance such as may have been observed in more northern climes, when the unsoiled snow reflects the last ray of the sunken sun. So calm was the night, and so pure the atmosphere, the watch-calls in the Spartan encampment were distinctly heard on the Messenian tower, mingling with the perpetual moan of the rippling stream. The Messenian youths, though far less influenced by the soft beauties of nature, than by those casual paroxysms which try the courage of man, and shake his confidence in an apparent security, could not look unmoved on this fair vision of earthly beauty.

Gonippus was the first to break silence:—"I have some doubt, king Euphaes, whether gazing on this soft and pleasing scene, is calculated to produce those feelings most suited to stir our souls to the deeds of valour by which alone we can regain possession of our native fields."

"I have not brought you here, noble chiefs," said Euphaes, "merely to enjoy the soft breath of evening, and to gaze on the beauties of nature, though I think that such a night as this, might stir

the spirit of those who no longer possess their just control over more than a few strong citadels in that land, on which the growing moon is now throwing her parting rays."

"For my own part," said Gonippus, "I could better make love on such a night as this, than unsheath the falchion; and I think a song of Anachreon's, in a maiden's ear, would better harmonize with the scene, than Homeric songs, chaunted by the rough voices of our followers." And so saying, he began to sing in a low tone of voice, a favourite stanza.

"Good Gonippus," said Aristomenes, who too well knew the character of his friend to be either surprised or offended at the inappropriate appeal to the softer passion, "if our country were not now in the possession of our enemies, we might think with you, that love alone should be talked of on such a night as this. But look at the white tents in the distance, and think of Euephnus and Theopompus and Euryleon, who are there encamped, ready to sacrifice to the avarice of Sparta the flower of the Messenian youth, our dames and our maidens, and your love will die a violent death."

“I sought your presence here to-night,” said Euphaes, “that we may resolve on some course of action for the defence of our country. Shut up in our fortresses, we have trained the youth to carry arms, and by occasional skirmishes, have taught them to face, without fear, the savage Spartan. They now burn with an ardent desire to meet their foes in a general engagement, and so great is their enthusiasm, I fear that any longer to restrain them will be attended with mischievous consequences, as they may loose confidence in their leaders, and attribute our reluctance to fear, rather than to prudence. We have hitherto refused the encounter, because we feared to stake the interests of Messenia, upon the result of a battle in which we must have the disadvantage, from the inexperience of our troops. They are now accustomed to martial exercise, and the endurance of fatigue, and we have therefore less to fear, but it requires our best deliberation whether we ought to yield to the solicitations of our brave followers, and meet the enemy in the field.”

Gonippus, although he had indulged his companions with reflections upon the scenery, not

altogether appropriate to the circumstances under which they met, at once gave his ready assent to the suggestion so carefully proposed by Euphaes; and anxious for the opportunity of meeting his foes, insisted on the propriety of an immediate attack, and of giving the Messenian youths a fair trial of skill with the foreign invaders.

"Most noble friends," said Aristomenes, "we shall do well to take the earliest opportunity of checking the Spartan arms, but we must not rashly meet the experienced and veteran soldiers, who are now holding, by a lawless tenure, the possession of our fields. Gonippus advises rashly, when he prompts us to make a hurried attack on the well guarded encampment of our enemies, without any knowledge of the extent of their force, or their plans of action. That we are prepared to strike a blow which may intimidate the Spartan leaders, and check their haughty confidence, is not to be doubted, and it is certain our brave followers will not long be restrained by our cautious policy, now they have exercised their arms on the Lacedemonian frontiers, and tried their strength with the marauding parties who hover round our strong-holds."

Neither Euphaes, or Gonippus, would probably have disputed with Aristomenes the propriety of the course he had recommended; although the latter would have been much better pleased, if he had been permitted at the moment to raise the garrison to arms, and to have led his detachment into the open plain, in spite of the love-inducing night; for to him no scene was more pleasant, than the glittering of shields, and the brave onset of contending armies. We do not mean to say that Gonippus loved war for its own sake, or would willingly have cherished in his heart, or excited in others, the vile passions from which it has its birth; but, governed by an intense love of country, and a hatred of its enemies, his fearless mind sought danger as the only means of protecting the one and destroying the other.

Euphaes had been prepared by his previous knowledge of the character of the two chieftains, whom he had thought fit to call to his councils, for the caution of the one, and the unheeding impetuosity of the other. "Is it not well," he said, "that in forming a resolution on which the interests of our country must be staked, we should appeal to the will of the

gods? Theocles, the diviner, readeth the stars, let him say what should be the determination of the Messenians, at the present emergency."

Gonippus was accordingly requested to seek the priest of Apollo at the temple of his god, and to desire his attendance. In a few minutes he returned accompanied by the sacred prophet, who was dressed in the flowing white vestment of his order. Theocles was a man of middle age and stature, singular in his appearance and gait, and awkwardly abrupt in manner. Over his shoulders flowed a profusion of black hair, and his thin, haggard, anxious countenance, was rendered more shrewd and piercing by the excessive brightness of his dark eye.

"I ask not your message," said Theocles, "the gods have revealed your purpose. By dreams, and by birds, by sacrifice, and by words, they have foretold the success of the Messenian arms. Dreams come from Jove, though from the womb of earth they spring. Stretched on her lap, auspicious warnings flitted over my mind, and when I woke,

' My breast,
With greater joy and gladness was possess'd,
Because at break of day my dreams appear'd.' "

“On Apollo’s altar I offered sacrifice, and the entrails of the beast gave fitting omens for the execution of your designs. The stars also speak favourably: Jupiter, the great lord of bounty and success, rules the first in his own house and dignities; and in the house of enemies, the cold, delaying Saturn hangs his leaden orb, afflicted by the fiery Mars, which aspects with a beneficent trine the lord of life. Away, noble chiefs, and meet the Spartans before they pour their armies on the Messenian plains, and surround our citadels. But not you, king Euphaes; stir not from Ampheia for three days to come, or death follows.”

“Death and honour are to be preferred before life and a suspicion of cowardice,” the king replied; “where the Messenian troops go, I must lead.”

The conversation was here suddenly interrupted by the presence of Alvattes. The chiefs looked at him, and at each other in astonishment, wondering by what means he had entered the city; whether by a knowledge of the pass-word, or by the secret paths with which he was, as the reader knows, well acquainted. Without waiting for a salutation or an invitation to speak, he thus addressed Aristomenes:—

“If the Messenian chief would avert evil, and

secure an advantage to his country, let the flower of the army meet the Spartan forces by sun-rise."

"My old friend of the mountains, as sure as I crossed them," said Gonippus, "we will be there for certain, that is, if the king and the gods permit, and sorely will the Spartans rue it."

"The Messenians will, if you are not," Alvattes replied, still keeping his eye fixed upon Aristomenes.

"I ask you not," said the young chieftain, "by what means you have entered Ampheia, or how you have obtained information of the purpose of our meeting this evening, but you may inform us what cause we have for fear in our fortress, and what gain we can have by meeting so suddenly the Spartan army in the open country."

"If I had ever deceived you, or wavered in my determination, you might have put these questions with more reason," Alvattes replied, evidently desiring to avoid any explanation; "but my words are few; you have treacherous chiefs in Ithome, and the chain of conspiracy will be broken by a ready show of valour on your part."

"Then, if the gods and our warriors will, we will face the enemy at the appointed hour," said

king Euphaes, pleased with the prospect of so soon leading the army into the presence of his enemies. Aristomenes having every reason to feel confidence in the good intentions and judgment of Alvattes, gave his consent. No persuasion, however, could induce the slave to remain one hour in the fortress after the delivery of his message, and the success of his plans. Escaping from the presence of the Messenian chiefs, as hastily as he had made his appearance, he was not seen again by them or the watch who paced round the walls of Ampheia.

“A strange guide, but a good one,” said Gonippus, as soon as Alvattes had left the apartment, “and a most welcome one to our brave soldiers. Shall I sound the trumpet, and call the men to arms?”

“Let caution still mark our determinations,” Aristomenes replied, almost angry at the impetuosity of his companion. “The sound of the trumpet would be heard in the Spartan camp, and betray our resolve. Let the soldiers be called to arms by a quieter voice, and be careful to avoid the very appearance of unusual activity. Let these matters be attended to, good Gonippus, and in a few minutes we will join our brave companions.”

Thus terminated the council, and both Aristomenes and Euphaes rose to prepare themselves for the expedition, but Theocles still stood looking at the king.

"You go not, Euphaes," he at last said; "the gods deny it."

"This is not an hour," the monarch replied, "to draw back from the path of duty. Why am I a king, if I lead not my subjects in the path of danger, as well as enjoy the blessings of peace? Speak not, Aristomenes, I am resolved; the gods ordain the result; it is mine to act. So farewell, Theocles; go I will."

"To repent your rashness, and bend to your fate; to deprive the Messenians of their sovereign, as well as their fields," said the diviner. But Euphaes was inflexible.

CHAPTER XVI.

“ Within a narrower ring compress'd, beset,
Hopeless, not heartless, strive and struggle yet ;
Ah ! now they fight in finest file no more,
Hemm'd in, cut off, cleft down, and trampled o'er ;
But each strikes singly, silently, and home,
And sinks outwearied rather than o'ercome,
His last faint quittance rendering with his breath,
Till the blade glimmers in the grasp of death !”

CORSAIR.

WHILE Gonippus was calling to arms the willing youth who had so long desired to meet their enemies on the field of strife, Aristomenes and king Euphaes were making such arrangements, as should ensure their little army the support of the soldiers who could be spared from the neighbouring fortresses. Messengers

were therefore sent to the commanders of all the strong holds, desiring them to haste with such men as could be spared, without endangering the safety of the places. Although the chiefs had full confidence in the valour of their followers, they well knew that the impetuosity of their zeal would not be a match for the discipline and coolness of the Spartan troops, more than double their own number. To seize the present moment for action seemed desirable, but still they were determined to avoid an engagement, until their numbers were increased by reinforcements from the neighbouring citadels.

The Messenian soldiers, as soon as they heard that it was resolved to attack the Spartan troops, prepared themselves with alacrity for the coming fight. With a cool and determined intrepidity, they ranged themselves in their companies, waiting the appearance of those by whom they were to be led to their desired revenge. When king Euphaes and the beloved Aristomenes, dressed in their full warlike costume, walked from rank to rank, examining the equipments of their troops, a low murmur of approbation was uttered by the soldiers, a suppressed shout of triumphant feeling. The violent ebullition of pleasure

was checked by the peremptory orders issued by Gonippus, but the silence maintained, and the almost noiseless tread of the soldiers, were but stronger evidences of the deep determination of their hearts, to acquit themselves like injured men in the approaching struggle.

The moon had sunk beneath the horizon, but her beams were little regretted by the Messenian generals, for the clear atmosphere so little impeded the progress of the light from more distant worlds, that by following the course of the stream, flowing through the plain which bounded the Messenian and Lacedemonian territory, it was easy to advance to the very verge of that portion of the river, where the Spartan army was encamped.

The word of command was given, the gates opened, and the troops were instantly in motion. A company of horsemen, with Aristomenes as their leader, led the way; Gonippus, with the foot soldiers, followed, and king Euphaes, with the veteran horse, were the rear guard. Round the walls of Ampheia, were gathered the women and children, bidding adieu to their fathers, husbands, and friends, and offering earnest prayer to the gods for their safety and success. All the preparations for this expedition had been conducted with

so much caution, that if the Spartan army had been encamped, beneath the walls of Ampheia, its guards could scarcely have been aware of any unusual stir in the fortress, before the army issued from its gates. The tramp of horses, and the heavy sound of the soldiers' feet, blending with the low 'farewell' and the foreboding sighs of those who had assembled to witness the departure of their friends, broke upon the startled ear of night, and, as Gonippus thought, disturbed the love-working charm of tranquil nature.

The ponderous gates closed; the gazers retired to their homes in the city; the watch again resumed their stealthy pace round the walls; and the warriors pursued their journey towards that spot on which they were to receive the attack, or from which they were to advance upon their enemies. Before the sun rose, the Messenian army was drawn up in battle array, and the Spartans, roused from their security, struck their tents and prepared for combat. A narrow, but rapid stream alone separated the opposing armies. When the morning dawned, both were amazed to find themselves almost within bow-shot of the enemy. The Messenians were surprised when they found that the Spartan army was more than four times as large as

their own, and the leaders determined to wait, if possible, the arrival of their auxiliaries from other fortresses, before they commenced an engagement. The Spartans, on the other hand, looked with contempt on their enemies, and were cheered by the hope that a single battle would inevitably consign to them the rich and luxuriant fields of Messenia. Buoyed with this hope, the soldiers were ranged in order to receive the attack of the Messenians, which they courted by their taunts.

King Theopompus and Euryleon, who with the less barbarous Polydorus, were the chiefs of the Spartan army, were thwarted in their plans of action, but confident of victory were little disposed to consider that as an unfortunate circumstance, which promised to put a speedy termination to the war, and give to Sparta an immediate possession of the invaded province.

“I am quite unable to believe,” said Theopompus, addressing Euryleon, who was receiving in the monarch’s tent the order of attack, “that this unexpected appearance of the Messenian army, is a matter of chance. They have heard, be assured, of our intentions, and to foil them, have bearded us in the plain. Nor will they fight if they can run away, for their leaders too well know the character of our troops to

risk the fate of their power, in the hands of a few striplings."

"They are in our power," said Euryleon, "and the fault will be our own if we permit them to retire to their fortresses again. Not a man must escape to carry the tidings of their defeat; it will then be of little moment to Sparta, whether those whom she has trusted, have broken, or kept their promises, the council would surely be careful under any circumstances to trust those with authority, who are not even true to the interests of their own country."

"Chrysos seeks his own advantage," Theopompus replied, "and if he finds that he can secure it by breaking faith with our senate, he will do it as readily as he sold his country. But who are at the head of this notable band of warriors beside Euphaes?"

"Aristomenes is there, thank the gods, and that is all I care to know," Euryleon replied.

"It is he the Messenians trust in as their most powerful chief, and most expert general! And now I bethink myself, you know something of his prowess and strength. You were rather uncereemoniously treated at Ampheia, by this same worthy."

“So much the worse for him to-day,” said Euryleon, annoyed with an allusion to his defeat, “he must, like Achilles, wear armour forged by Vulcan if he escapes me.”

“If bulk of body, and weighty blows were the only essentials, I would pledge my crown on the fulfilment of your vow, but report says,”—

A sudden shout of joy from the Messenian troops, here arrested the attention of the Spartans, and prevented the quarrel which would probably have soon arisen between the chiefs. “What means that shout?” both of them inquired of Polydorus, who at the moment entered the tent.

“Several detachments of Messenians are hastening from the various citadels, to join the enemy,” he replied, “and I can perceive that our troops will need all their determined courage and coolness, to meet the enraged enemy. The gods, and the senate of Sparta, know that I have not counselled the unnatural war, nor the base means that have been taken to obtain the advantage, by fraud and cowardice. But now we are, without remedy, involved in the quarrel, let us make the best of our time, before our enemies are further re-inforced.”

Neither of the Spartan chiefs thought fit to enter upon the question thus introduced by Polydorus, for in their estimation, the weakness of the Messenians, and their own ability to conquer the territory, were sufficient reasons to justify the attempt. The chiefs having determined to immediately engage the Messenians, Theopompus, placed himself at the head of the right wing of the army that he might oppose Euphaes. Polydorus commanded the left wing opposed to Gonippus, and Eurelyon and Aristomenes, the central division of the respective armies. The word of command being given, the Spartans rushed forward to the attack, and the Messenians unable to restrain their fury, and carried away by the impetuosity of their feelings suddenly drew up to the margin of the stream that separated the combatants. A shower of javelins met the front ranks of the Spartan army as it advanced, and in an instant the Messenian youths drew their falchions, determined to resist to death the impetuous onset. But although, from the conduct of both armies, a general and bloody engagement seemed inevitable, the troops were suddenly checked by the stream flowing between them, the waters of which, swollen by recent rains, had overflown their channel, and urged

their progress with an unusual impetuosity. The Messenians finding their enemies suddenly impeded by the foaming torrent, hurled on them another volley of javelins, and felled again the foremost rank of their enemies. "Come on, ye Spartans," shouted the bold youths, still standing in a close compact line to receive the onset. "Spartans, be firm," shouted their leaders; but their order was broken, and the bravest were evidently unwilling to encounter the double danger of the furious stream, and still more impetuous enemy. A few horsemen met and exchanged blows, and the lances hurled around, bent many a noble form, as the proud and self secure oak totters and falls under the axe of the woodman. The skirmish, for engagement it could not be called, was so decidedly to the disadvantage of the Spartan army, that withdrawing from the field of strife, they hastily erected at a distance, a few tents, and evinced an anxious desire to avoid any further trial of skill.

The number of the Messenian army had been, during the day, greatly augmented by the arrival of troops from the various fortresses, and the soldiers so anxiously besought their leaders to give them an opportunity of fairly trying their martial prowess with the

enemy, that to resist their importunity was impossible, The chiefs were less unwilling to listen to the request of their followers, because they were quite certain that the slight advantage obtained over the Spartan troops was not sufficient to give them an hour's rest from the horror of domestic war, or relieve them from the necessity of abandoning their fields to the avarice of their enemy. Their numbers had, also, now some adequate proportion to those of their opponents, and the courage of the troops was not inferior to that of the Spartans, whatever comparison might be made to their disadvantage on every point of skill and discipline.

The sun had nearly touched the western boundary, separating heaven and earth, before the Messenian chiefs, resolved to give their enemies a fair field of fight, determined to cross the river and encamp on the opposite side waiting the rising sun to engage afresh the Spartan troops in mortal strife.

When the morning dawned, both armies, though at a considerable distance from each other, were ready for battle, but neither seemed willing to commence the attack. The Spartans had been met with a degree of courage and resolution they little expected from their

enemies, of whom they had been taught to entertain the most degrading opinions. The Messenian youths, on the other hand, remembering their homes, their wives, and their infants, taunted their enemies with a want of human affection, daring them to the struggle. The chiefs, scarcely able to restrain the impetuosity of their followers, feared to delay any longer the attack, and Aristomenes, with a select body of his cavalry covering the footmen, rushed upon the central division of the Spartan army, commanded by Euryleon. Almost each javelin took effect, and in a few moments the warriors fought with their falchions hand to hand, and with such deadly hatred that, wherever two opposing warriors met, the conflict only ceased with the death of one. The sight of this struggle so stirred the enthusiasm of the Messenians not yet engaged in the action, that their leaders, unable to curb their fury, were compelled to join the fight. Every hand was raised against his fellow, and in a few minutes the plain was covered with the bodies of the fallen.

The central division of the Spartan army shaken, and disordered by the impetuous attack of the Messenians, was evidently giving way to the fury of the injured youths, whose daring bravery seemed to

increase with their chance of conquest. Among a small group of horsemen still determined to maintain the fight, the person of Euryleon was conspicuous. Again and again, he urged his soldiers to resist, but finding all his efforts unavailing, he spurred his courser forward, sweeping away with his falchion all who opposed him, to seek the leader of this brave band of Messenians. His giant form, his lowering and savage eye, and his unremitting cruelty had already attracted the attention of Aristomenes, who was not unwilling to give that personal encounter he sought. No sooner had he caught sight of the Messenian chief than he raised his huge arm, and threw, with terrible force, a lance, which flying past the young hero, was almost buried in the earth.

“Have you so soon forgot,” said Aristomenes, “the lesson I taught you in Ampheia? Base braggard, Messenia and I defy you.”

“And will you again,” Euryleon replied, “dare to meet the arm of one to whom the gods have long consigned thy gentle person? Follow thy sires to the shades: they wait for thee!”

So saying, he aimed a deadly blow at his antagonist, which would have hurled to the earth a less expe-

rienced, or more inactive foe. Blow followed blow, and their shields rung with the stroke of the falchions. As the lioness defends her cubs, so fought Aristomenes; to him it was of little personal moment whether he conquered or fell; he fought for his country, and the insulted house of Polychares. His antagonist, on the other hand, maddened by a recollection of his former defeat, raged with an inconceivable hatred of him who had thrown a shadow over his laurels, and now, in the face of Sparta thwarted his arms.

“Thou art again the victim of thy own malice;” shouted Aristomenes, accompanying the words with a blow which prostrated the huge body of the Spartan upon the ground. The retiring and half intimidated army seeing their leader fall, rushed forward to the rescue, and hand to hand, the Spartans and the Messenians fought for the person of Euryleon. Which would have conquered in this struggle, had it been maintained, is scarcely a matter of doubt; but the attention of Aristomenes and his brave attendants was drawn towards the fortunes of other parts of the field of strife.

Success had followed the exertions of that wing of

the Messenian army, commanded by Gonippus, and the good king Polydorus was among the slain. But the troops of Euphaes and Theopompus strove in vain for mastery, both maintained their ground with the most obstinate courage.

“Is it good,” said the Spartan, “that we should be thus resisted; I will close this conflict with thy life, Euphaes.”

“Does not Theopompus,” the Messenian replied, “well imitate the bloody-minded Polynices, who at the head of an army of strangers, levied war against his native country, and with his own hand, slew a brother, by whom, at the same instant, he himself was slain? In like manner does the Spartan king, with unnatural hatred, persecute his kinsmen of the race of Hercules; but I trust he shall meet the punishment due to his impiety.”

The rival kings instantly closed in a personal conflict intended by both to be fatal. Thus excited to an honourable trial of strength, the soldiers on both sides recommenced the attack, and fought with ungovernable fury. Many fell, but such was the inveterate hatred, not one sought his life at the price of a ransom, but to the latest moment of his existence indulged

only a desire to injure some of the opposing party, each being identified as the representative of his country. A small company of soldiers, on each side, stood around the conflicting monarchs, and watched with the most intense anxiety, the effect of every blow, neither attempting to advance on the other. But after a long continued conflict, in which neither had obtained an advantage, both of them backed their horses, and couched their lances as if to decide the conflict in a single tilt. They met, and terrible was the onset; the armour of each rung with the sound of the blow, and both were thrown from their saddles. For a moment, the guards stood amazed, and then, drawing their falchions, rushed forward to rescue their respective sovereigns. Scarcely a blow was struck by either party, but, satisfied in securing the persons of the chieftains, they retreated, neither of them knowing, and scarcely thinking, of the injury that had been effected.

Night was now drawing her impenetrable curtain over the conflicting parties, and the field, though fought with obstinate valour, could not be claimed by either. The loss of warriors had been great, and either party would have been willing, but was too proud, to ask a suspension of arms to inter the dead; it was,

however, unnecessary to prefer the request, for this sacred duty was performed as a rite, the necessity of which was equally felt by the Spartans and Messenians.

The morning dawned, and the enemy was no longer before the Messenians, for during the night they had struck their tents, and retreated; a circumstance that was no small relief to their opponents. The Messenians, finding themselves separated from the object of their still unmitigated hatred, returned to Ampheia, carrying with them king Euphaes, who had been dangerously wounded, and, as the reader will imagine, in a much less excited state of mind than that which they had indulged when they left it to encounter the foe.

CHAPTER XVII.

' A maiden of the royal race,
Of spotless fame, of virgin grace,
Shall on the altar bleed ; and we
Will for her virtue succour thee."

THE GRECIAN ORACLE.

THE loss of the Spartans, in the engagement described in the last chapter, was much greater than that of the Messenians, but the ultimate effect was scarcely to be anticipated. Many of the best trained troops of Messenia had been slain and their places it was not possible quickly to fill, but every Spartan was a warrior, and the destruction of one army was but a reason for immediately sending another more formidable than the last. The partial victory gained by the Messenians

was, in fact, a great public loss, though, from the existence of a conspiracy among some of the chiefs at Ithome, it would scarcely have been possible to have avoided the conflict, had it been desired. Nor was this the worst feature in the picture. Many of the slaves had been induced, from a hope of gain, to escape from their masters, the harvests had been almost entirely lost from want of proper attention, and a direful pestilence, no respecter of persons, cutting down, indiscriminately, the warrior and the infant, reduced the patriots to a fearful state of want and despair. Secure in their fortresses, they watched the Spartan troops ravaging their harvests, murdering the husbandman wherever he was met with, and destroying the unprotected cities and villages by fire.

Unable to stem the torrent, one fortress after another yielded to the impetuous attack of the Spartan troops, and the miserable inhabitants who escaped, were compelled to seek a protection in the almost inaccessible mountain of Ithome. To this place king Euphaes, accompanied by his queen, and Helen, who had placed herself under the protection of this virtuous matron, were escorted by Aristomenes, and the other Messenian nobles, who had taken up their residence

at Ampheia, a fortress which was now entirely given up to the enemy. The king, who had been seriously wounded in the side by the lance of Theopompus, was still suffering greatly from the effect of the blow, and the cure was, perhaps, delayed and prevented by the anxiety of his mind from the sudden reverses of fortune, and the unmitigated horrors of famine and disease, which now afflicted his subjects. Aristomenes made every exertion to support the courage of his countrymen, and to prevent them from indulging those superstitious fears which too often paralyze the energies of an uneducated people, but half recovered from a state of barbarism. Every day, however, increased their misery, and it was at last resolved that inquiry should be made of Apollo at Delphi, by what sacrifice the anger of the gods could be averted.

The messenger returned, and the people assembled in the temple of Jupiter, on the summit of Mount Ithome, to hear the command of the oracle. Around the altar stood all the Messenian nobles, who still remained attached to the interests of their country. But the attention of the people was chiefly directed to one who had entered the temple unseen, and taken his place among the chieftains,

leading in his hand, a tall, pale, and beautiful young woman. This noble, Aristodemus by name, had, some years previous to the commencement of hostilities, withdrawn from his native country, and accompanied by his daughter, an only child, had visited Athens, and other parts of Greece, to examine their forms of government, and to ascertain the habits and opinions of the inhabitants. The news of the war had reached him in his voluntary exile, and he instantly returned to assist his unhappy country.

Aristodemus was a man of herculean stature; and a deep contemplative cast of features, gave him a fearful aspect. On his countenance was written a sternness of purpose, and a determination in the execution of his resolves, we might perhaps add a cruelty of disposition, which was in the highest degree repulsive to a stranger. Known, however, among his countrymen as a warrior of amazing skill and power, an inflexible patriot, and a man of excellent council, his presence was hailed with joy on the present occasion, both by the nobles and the people.

The female whom he conducted, was his daughter.

A deep melancholy was the most remarkable character of her countenance, and gave an inexpressible loveliness to her regular and beautiful features. A mild and passive benevolence of heart, a devoted attachment to her parent and country, and an acquiescence in the circumstances of her lot, which suitably directed would have been a high toned piety, had distinguished her among her companions during her residence in Messenia. She had been the early friend and companion of Helen, and when they thus unexpectedly met at the solemn occasion of which we have spoken, they embraced each other with tender regard, and wept over the remembrance of the days of pleasure they had enjoyed in the times of peace, plenty, and happiness.

The public proceedings, delayed for a few moments by the appearance of Aristodemus and his daughter, were now commenced. Ephebolus, the diviner, in the robes of his sacred office, advanced to the altar, and uttered in a deep tone of voice the following awful announcement:—

“Messenians! it is the stern, and incontrovertible will of the gods, that you should sacrifice a virgin of the royal race for the sins of the people,

that the pestilence may be stayed, and success again attend your arms."

This awful decree was heard in solemn silence, and produced a chilling and almost breathless horror. The beautiful maidens who stood round the place of sacrifice, gazed on each other with anxious uncertainty, and hung with trembling fondness round their parents. Helen, and the daughter of Aristodemus, alone stood unmoved, though a deep flush and an excessive paleness alternately passed over their countenances. Chrysos was not present, nor was the lovely Nausicaa among the group.

The lots were cast, and the daughter of Lyciscus was chosen. The announcement was made, and the terrified and frantic child sprang into the arms of her father and clung around his neck. Lyciscus, was a young man, and being but distantly connected with the royal line, and but little known as an active warrior, the choice was received with even some degree of satisfaction by the populace. The child also, who was not more than six or seven years of age, was, as they thought, a better subject for sacrifice than any of the beautiful young women who stood trembling with fear around the awful instru-

ments of death. But who could look upon the struggling infant, hiding her face in the bosom of her parent, her auburn tresses hanging over her shoulders, without weeping for the anticipated fate of such a creature of purity and love? The spectators waited in painful anxiety for the execution of the awful mandate, but the father pressed the child more closely to his bosom, and stood as though wrapped up in his intense affection;—he was unconscious of all around him, except that his darling babe was to be by force taken from his arms and murdered. An incident, however, suddenly turned the course of these proceedings, and excited a new class of feelings in the breast of the assembled multitude.

Lyciscus had married the daughter of Ephēholus the diviner, and the maiden, whose fate it had been to be chosen as a fitting sacrifice for the offences of Messenia, was his grandchild. The heart that was not easily softened by the sorrow and pain of others; stern, unrelenting, and savagely superstitious; yielded to the dictates of parental affection. The knife was on the altar, but he took it not; he stood revolving in his mind,

by what stratagem he might evade the decision of the lot.

“It were impiety to the gods,” said Ephebolus, “any longer to withhold from you, Messenians, the parentage of the child, who has this day been taken by lot. She is not of the royal stock, but an adopted daughter, the wife of Lyciscus having had no children. The sacrifice of this child therefore, would not fulfil the command of the gods, so the choice must be made again.”

This announcement was received by both the nobles and populace with great dissatisfaction, and angry clamour, the motive which had dictated the assertion being suspected by all. The populace insisted on the execution of the mandate, and each noble, fearing that another selection might deprive him of a child, resolutely opposed the advice of Ephebolus. In angry discussion and recrimination the assembly was for several hours engaged, and order was at last restored by King Euphaes, that the solemn and awful sacrifice might be made. But while the assembly had been thus disputing, Lyciscus, whose parental affection had prevailed over the dictates of patriotism and religion, had made his

escape with his child from the temple, and passing the gates of Ithome unobserved, hastened towards Sparta, hoping to find protection among the enemies of his country. When the populace discovered that this had happened, their rage broke forth uncontrolled, and Ephebolus himself would have been slain to satisfy the revenge of his countrymen, had not the sanctity of his office protected him. A new choice was demanded with clamour, and to prevent the possibility of escape, every entrance to the temple was guarded.

In the midst of this tumult, Aristomenes rose, and addressed his countrymen, urging, that as a victim had been chosen, and had escaped, the want of the sacrifice was no longer a disobedience to the will of the gods, but that the intention would be received as an absolute compliance with the command of the oracle; and that in one sense the sacrifice had been offered, for the escape of Lyciscus with the child, was a voluntary banishment, which Messenia would for ever enforce. To this opinion the people listened with respect, and might soon have been persuaded of its propriety, but Ephebolus, who having saved his grandchild, was now

anxious to preserve it from the possibility of the execution of the sentence at any future time, again denied the suitability of the child, as it was of inferior parentage, and that a victim was still demanded by the gods.

The moment of suspense and awful fear now returned: but while the assembled multitude looked on each other, undecided as to the course to be adopted, Aristodemus stepped forward, and said, "Messenians, I am of noble birth, standing next to the throne; and it is fitting that a noble victim should be given to the gods to appease their anger and save our country. I have a daughter, and I voluntarily offer her to be the sacrifice."

The astonished assembly listened, and then fixed their eyes on the pale countenance of the intended victim. She stood leaning on the arm of Helen, and a deep sigh was the only answer she gave to the unnatural and voluntary sacrifice thus offered by her father. With an anxious and inquiring look she turned to the crowd, and then embraced her friend with an earnest affection, as if she had already resolved to resign herself to the knife of the priest.

"Can it be true?" Helen exclaimed, as she pressed her to her bosom, and wept over her pale cheek. "Are Messenians monsters, that they should thus voluntarily sacrifice their children?"

"Say not so," said the devoted one, "if my poor, frail, and fading life can protect Messenia, why should it be withheld?" And freeing herself from the embrace of her friend, she kissed the stern brow of her relentless and unpitying father, and turning to Ephebolus said, "I am ready."

The priest was advancing to take the unresisting victim, with the instruments of sacrifice in his hand, when a youth pressed his way through the crowd, threw his arm round the maiden, and claimed her as his betrothed wife; urging that her life could only be disposed of by her destined husband, and not by her inhuman father. Violently pushing back the priest, he vowed that he would plunge his falchion into the heart of the man who should attempt to separate them. The maiden who had before so quietly resigned herself to the dictates of her father, leaned on the breast of her lover, who supporting her on his left arm, held the bare falchion for her protection in his right hand. The populace, however, had

been disappointed, and the recollection of the misfortunes under which they were suffering, rushed into their minds. They demanded that the sacrifice should be immediately made, and were proceeding to such violence, that Euphaes, Aristomenes, and other nobles, gathered round the affectionate youth, to protect him from the outburst of their anger. Finding, however, that his assumed right over the person of his betrothed bride would not be admitted, he asserted that she was already his wife, and that she did not answer the requisition of the gods. This avowal excited the indignation and ungovernable anger of Aristodemus, who, rushing towards the youth, snatched his daughter from his embrace, and plunged his dagger into her breast. The youth caught her as she fell, and seeking death rather than separation, inflicted a similar wound on his own person, and, pledged to love in life, they died in each others embrace. From this unnatural deed by a warrior of high renown, and a devoted patriot, it is evident, says an ancient historian, "how destiny covers and hides the feeble virtues of men, as the slime of a river does the shining ornaments which are strewed over its bed."

Ephebolus, unsatisfied with the effusion of blood, and the sacrifice of life, declared that the gods still required another victim, for Aristomedus had slain his daughter to satisfy his own ungovernable passions, and not in obedience to the demand of the oracle. But Euphaes, who with the principal nobles had been deeply affected by the tragical scene, said, that all Apollo had commanded had been fulfilled,—a virgin of noble blood had been slain, and it was not for them to inquire, as it had not been communicated, by what means or by whom the victim was to be put to death.

CHAPTER XVIII.

' Much to be known, that much affects the tale.

'Tis done ! 'Tis done ! the conqueror cries,—All hail !

Stay yet awhile, the war is but begun ;

'Tis when the spirit dies, the battle's won."

THE PROPHECY.

THE Messenians, fully convinced that they had complied with the mandate of the oracle, returned to their fastnesses with a revived determination to resist the enemy, and to defend the capital to the last moment. Unable, from the fewness of their numbers, to take the field against a well disciplined and powerful foe, they contented themselves with harrassing the invaders by occasional, and well regulated skirmishes, causing, by

their unexpected attacks, a constant fear, which did much to restrain the activity and barbarity of the Spartan soldiers. In this manner they carried on the war for several months, displaying, on many occasions, an obstinate valour, though they derived no advantage but that which results from preventative measures.

The moral strength of the Messenians was thus daily increased; but, too weak to strike an effectual blow, they sought the interest and assistance of several neighbouring states. The Argives and Arcadians joined with alacrity the Messenian standard, not perhaps so much for the purpose of establishing the liberties of the weaker state, as to indulge their hereditary hatred of the Spartans, and the institutions of Lycurgus. With these powerful allies, the Messenians again took the field with Euphaes at their head, but the monarch had not entirely recovered of the wound he received in personal conflict with Theopompus. By the extraordinary exertions and feats of Aristodemus, and Aristomenes, the troops of Sparta were routed with great loss, but the king pursuing his advantage with a greater zeal than was warranted by his strength, was suddenly overpowered by numbers, and slain. The loss of this virtuous monarch, and devoted patriot was

deeply felt by the Messenians, who, to the latest moment of their existence as an independent nation, paid an annual tribute to his memory.

Aristodemus, as the noble nearest to the throne, assumed the reins of government after the death of Euphaes, and, by his promptitude and ardour, encouraged the growing confidence of the Messenians, and defeated every attempt of the Spartans to subjugate the country. Baffled in their schemes, beaten in several skirmishes, and once in a pitched battle fought under the walls of Messene, the ambitious state had resort to treachery.

Chrysos, a noble whose secret attachment to the Spartan interest was well known to his countrymen, had been engaged in the battle, fighting, with great bravery, under the banner of the enemy. The following day he was taken prisoner by a small party of Messenian soldiers who were seeking booty on the field of battle, and was conducted to the capital as an enemy and a traitor to his country.

Aristodemus, apprised of the capture of Chrysos, convened a council of the few Messenian nobles who yet remained firm to their allegiance, and before them the prisoner was brought.

“It is a task I like not,” said Aristodemus, “to sit here as a judge upon you, Chrysos, who was an early friend and companion a fellow soldier, a patriot, and a statesman, A cursed love of gold has, I fear, turned you from your allegiance, and induced you to sell your honour and your country ; speak, if anything can be said in defence of your past conduct, or any pledge can be given for your future honesty ?”

“King Aristodemus, it is too true,” the culprit replied, “that I have forgotten my distressed country, under an infatuated desire of wealth and emolument. The false step once taken, I felt the difficulty of returning, and from a secret, became an open foe. Wealth I have obtained, if the possession of gold can be so called, but it has not satisfied me ; I have mourned over my country when I held the sword to aid the designs of Sparta. Let me die ; life is a burden I shall be pleased to part with, for my past conduct will for ever make me unfit to receive, and unable to enjoy, the confidence of my early companions and friends. Messenians will ever watch my actions with suspicion, and never believe the honesty of my motives.”

“Messenia is too poor in real courage and patriotism,” said Aristomenes, “to part with any one

who has heart and honesty to defend her rights, and past follies will soon be hidden by present virtues. If Chrysos sincerely desires to return to his allegiance, he may aid us much by his knowledge of the enemy's movements and intentions ;—his life may be as important to his country as to his own honour."

"For life, I care not," Chrysos replied ; "I may, by my death, be a warning to those who act the part of a traitor. I ask not for mercy, noble chieftains ; death is to be preferred to a constant recollection of disgrace. But I will do one act of justice to Messenia, before I die, that my memory may not be unconnected with a single recollection of a virtuous resolution. The Spartan troops, commanded by Euryleon, delayed by the booty and the number of the wounded, are encamped about four hours' march to the south of Messene ; they carry with them many Messenian women and children, and may be easily overtaken, and captured."

Such was the specious tale told by Chrysos, and the unwary chieftains listened with confidence. The traitor was not only pardoned, but received with all the confidence that could be desired by a mistaken, but sincere friend. The troops were hastily called to arms,

and their leaders, anxious to intercept the retreat of the discomfited enemy, passed the gates, and marched hastily toward the place where they expected to find Euryleon and his troops. But before they were out of sight of the fortress, they found their own return intercepted by a strong body of Spartan soldiers; the gates were thrown open, and the enemy entered. Remembering their wives and children, the Messenians ran, rather than marched, back, and succeeded in forcing a passage before the enemy was able to offer a sufficiently combined force to resist their progress. Aristodemus, careful only of his honour and country, fought with a terrible fury, hewing his way through the crowds who opposed him. Aristomenes, on the other hand, remembered Helen and the widowed queen; and hastened from one part of the city to another, seeking the object of his affection. He saw no enemy, his sword cleared his path, which but few dared to obstruct.

On a projecting platform of rock from which the whole city could be seen, stood Helen, and a crowd of distressed females.

"Oh! why do they tarry," said the queen, "who should protect us? Had Euphaes lived he would

have fought by our sides, and carried us unhurt through the ranks of the enemy. Where is Aristomenes? Look you, Helen, does he come? Will the gods protect us?"

"Peace, sweet lady!" Helen replied; "our brave soldiers fight hand to hand, with the Spartan troops. There is Aristodemus, he ploughs his way through the thickest ranks, and all fall beneath his sword. Oh! dreadful sight! But I see not Aristomenes; may the gods protect him!"

"Look, yet again, dear Helen," said the almost frantic queen, "come not the warriors hither? Which do yield? See you Aristomenes? Is he among the slain?"

"Oh, I can scarcely look! Now, now, the Spartans yield. The king's sword prevails; now he fights with one who looks of stature like Euryleon. May Heaven preserve him! He falls! he falls! But see, he rises, and—his enemy lies low. Still, he thrusts his way among the crowd, and all the opposing soldiers open their thick-set ranks to give him passage."

"Look towards the mountain's base, near to the agora, most noble lady," said one of the women who attended the queen, "there are troops of horsemen

hastening to the mountain. Let us take shelter at the altar of Jupiter."

"It protects not virtue. Think of the crime we have seen committed there, and for which the gods now afflict us," said Helen; and then, suddenly raising her voice, she exclaimed, "'Tis he! 'tis he! I know the plume that stands upon his crest."

A few minutes after, Aristomenes, attended by his faithful companions, arrived, and took the distressed females under his protection. Helen, and the queen, perhaps for the sake of her in whom he was personally so much interested, were the objects of his especial attention, though to all he showed so much kindness that none felt themselves neglected. Placing them on the horses he and his companions had ridden, he led the way, surrounding the little cavalcade with armed men, towards one gate of the city not yet taken by the enemy. This they reached in safety, and immediately commenced a hasty retreat to Andania.

In Messene the Spartans ultimately prevailed, and king Aristodemus, with the few warriors who fought by his side, were compelled to retreat, but in such disorder that each took his own path. The greater number reached Andania, but others fell, either from exhaus-

tion, or by the swords of the pursuing party. Aristodemus, finding himself separated from his companions in arms, excited almost to madness by the treachery of Chrysos, by the too willing confidence of himself and the Messenian chiefs, the defeat of his army, and the dismal prospects of his unhappy country, hurried away from the scene of strife, indifferent to the direction he took, and without any real object.

Night came on, and he found himself on an extensive plain, far to the west of Andania, and on the borders of Arcadia. The stars started one by one, in the order of their brilliancy from the darkening expanse, and the wind rushed, with a murmuring sound, through the low brushwood on every side.

“For what end do I live,” said the distressed monarch, “now that all for which I have laboured is lost? For what purpose have the gods made men, if the virtues they inculcate are to be the causes and instruments of suffering? I have served my country, and for its sake sacrificed all that I loved,—my daughter,—but Messenia has not been saved. Are the gods treacherous? Or do they reward vice, and punish virtue? But I will not be too nice in scrutinizing their acts; they best know how to direct who can see all,

who can more accurately read the future, than we remember the past and perceive the present. But for what am I to live, and why should not the falchion that has broken the cord of union between the mortal and immortal so often on the field of strife, perform for me the same office? To die! why it is but a moment's pang, and all is over. The dead see not, feel not, hear not. The strong and active arm lies motionless; the eye is fixed in its socket, and with a dull, yet glazed lustre, gives no reflection of the mind's passion. The mind! Ah, that's the fear. Thought is being; and that same thought which prompts me now to open the spring of bodily vitality, may blame me for the deed. I would die! and yet I would not be a thing without motion and thought, love and anger; but I would away from this scene of treachery and vice. Still the hand refuses to do an act of violence on the body, though the mind which it hath been accustomed to obey, prompts the deed. Oh! my country! Could I but shed my blood, as I did that of my child, for thee, Messenia."

Agitated by these distressing feelings, Aristodemus, wandered over the plain, seeking that forgetfulness of the past, which the disturbed state of his own mind

refused ; and which conscience, as active in the breast of a heathen in a semi-barbarous state, as in the man of refinement and civilization, would not permit him to seek by a deliberate attempt at self-destruction. The cords of feeling and affection may be so stretched as to break ; the sensibilities may become too violent for the resistance of a strong frame, and then the mind disengages itself from its frail tenement. It was thus with king Aristodemus ; the body yielded to exhaustion, and beneath the bright canopy of a Grecian plain, he breathed his last prayer for his conquered country, having no other wish for himself than the performance over his body of those rites which he believed to be necessary for the rest and happiness of his spirit.

The death of Aristodemus had a great effect upon the Messenians. Already distressed and dispirited by the loss of the capital, and by the success that had attended the arms of their enemies, they again gave way to the influence of superstition ; dreamed of things which presaged instant and utter ruin ; saw visions and prodigies, which gave a certainty to their fears, and reduced themselves to that enfeebled state of mind, which was a proof that their gloomy anticipations

would certainly be realized. Nothing is hopeless but that which a person has convinced himself unable to attain. A strong mind will overcome difficulties, and sometimes delights to meet them, as affording an opportunity for the exhibition of his mental energy. But while we condemn this rash and self-approving spirit, we admit that it is far less injurious to the possessor than a timid, reserved, and cowardly affectation of caution, springing from a belief in fate and supernatural agencies.

The Messenians, overcome by the superior strength of the Spartans, and by their own fears, left the national standard, and seeking the obscurity of mountain caverns, and of their ancient habitations, endeavoured to elude the research of their enemies. Some forsook their country, and availed themselves of the hospitality of Argos and Arcadia; many of the sacred families found a refuge among the priests of Eleusis, in Attica; but the greater number of the people, again took up their residence in the towns and villages in which they had lived previous to the war. The Spartans, however, held entire possession of the country, and not satisfied with extorting from the miserable remnant of their enemies an oath of allegiance, com-

pelled them to pay, as a tribute, one half the produce of the soil every year.

By destroying the ancient capital of Messenia to its foundations, and placing the inhabitants under the most galling and afflictive restrictions, Sparta hoped to maintain an undisputed control over the fertile province; and by preventing the possibility of any increase in the strength of the ancient possessors, to induce a feeling of dependence, which might ultimately cause them to submit to their degraded situation, and become the contended slaves, instead of the proud, bold, and daring masters of the soil. Hopeless as this must have appeared to any who studied the character of the Messenians, it was rendered utterly impossible by the advance of Chrysos, the friend and nearest relative of Androcles, to successive posts of honour, and ultimately to the government of the fertile district of Hyamia. The recollection of the treachery of this noble, the ultimate cause of the downfall of his native country, and the constant remembrance of his success in his advancement to power under the conquerors, caused a lively and intense desire to regain their native rights, and to punish the acts of duplicity and

severity committed under his authority. The nobles who had remained firmly attached to the interests of their country, and had evinced their patriotism by sternly resisting the invaders, were sought for by the Spartan leaders with a determination to either destroy or imprison them, and so to prevent the possibility of the conquered, but still patriotic people, rebelling against their new lords. The Messenian leaders, however, had taken every precaution to prevent the success of the expected search, and remained in their fastnesses, with their families and dependents, occasionally descending into the plains for the supply of their necessities, or for the purpose of harassing the enemy.

For a long time the Spartans continued to hold an almost undisputed possession of the country they had conquered, and a strong feeling of their own security, and the impotence of their enemies, caused them to watch with a less jealous eye the feelings and actions of the Messenians.

This people suffering under the hard and degrading conditions imposed on them, compelled to perform labours and menial services which had once been done for themselves by slaves; and at the

same time, finding by a constant augmentation of their numbers, that they were stronger than they had anticipated; were anxious for another opportunity of trying to regain their independence by the sword. The relaxation in the execution of those laws by which the Spartan senate hoped to prevent a revolt, gave them an opportunity of assembling together in the public places; of exciting each other by the statement of their grievances, and their ability to throw off the yoke. The young men, who had heard of the exploits of their forefathers, and of the prosperity of their native land, previous to the interference and conquest of the Spartans, were especially anxious to have an opportunity of exhibiting their prowess, willing, if necessary, to die in the defence of their homes, rather than be the passive agents of transmitting a continued slavery to posterity. An experienced leader, as they thought, was alone wanted to secure success; they had courage, strength, determination; a strong love of their country, and a feeling regard for those who needed their protection; a hatred of oppression, and a bitter contempt of their once cruel and oppressive, but now proud and degraded masters.

Such was the state of feeling among the enslaved Messenians at the close of that long period during which the Spartans retained possession of the conquered country, after the first Messenian war.

CHAPTER XIX.

' Within the heart so deeply is impressed
The character by nature given, a boy
Is but the image of the future man,
With passions, fears, and prejudice in bud ;
Just as the blade foretells the coming ear,
Its form and quality."

THE RETROSPECT.

ARCADIA had long professed an earnest regard for the interests of Messenia, and had frequently given proof of her sincerity, by sending her armies to assist her ancient ally. The Arcadians were a strong, energetic, and persevering people, having an excessive love of country, and a great aversion to every state that either became too powerful for its

neighbours, or evinced any desire to extend its authority by an enlargement of territory. During the continuation of the struggle between the two rival states, with whose fortunes our tale is so intimately connected, they had given an unceasing and valuable assistance to Messenia, and when it terminated, offered an asylum to Helen, and the other noble females who could not have found a place of safety in their native land.

Aristomenes and the nobles who had survived the destruction of their unhappy country, found a refuge in the inaccessible mountain of Ithome, and the vast range of the Taygetus, from which they occasionally descended to the plains, followed by the few dependents who still remained attached to their chiefs, and plundered the neighbouring towns and villages; both for the purpose of supporting themselves, and of having some revenge against those who had robbed them of their country. Aristomenes was now looked upon, by those exiled chieftains, as the only person capable of designing any extensive scheme for the recovery of Messenia, and he was known to be as capable of executing his designs, as cautious in his

determinations. He would therefore, probably, have been chosen to occupy the throne after the death of Aristodemus, had it not been usurped by strangers; and although, there was no real authority which could be delegated to him by his countrymen, he was tacitly acknowledged their sovereign, and invested with regal authority.

Aristomenes was anxious to maintain his influence over the minds of his colleagues, and encouraged them in their hope of ultimately obtaining the liberty they so anxiously sought. He frequently led them in the expeditions, by which they attempted to thwart or restrain their foes, and by assuming a disguise, visited the Spartan fortresses, making himself acquainted with the feelings, vigilance, and weakness of the inhabitants. To discover a suitable moment for the revival of the war, which had been so suddenly and unexpectedly closed, and to bring into action, the anxious and spirited energy of his countrymen, were the objects he had now before him. But he could not be unconscious that the united efforts of the Messenians, however well directed, must be altogether insufficient to meet the Spartans in an engagement, although it would be

possible, by taking advantage of their present indifference, or carelessness, to regain possession of the citadels, and to become for a time the masters of their own soil. With these feelings he had visited Arcadia, and other neighbouring states, to ascertain the amount of assistance he might expect from them, should the Messenians succeed in recovering possession of their lost citadels. The fame of the warrior had not been confined to his own country;—his were deeds heard and repeated in foreign lands, and all persons agreed in believing, that he would ultimately signalize himself by exploits, scarcely told in the records of nations. By the Arcadians and Argives he was received with the warmest expressions of friendship, and by assurances that they would aid him in any design he might undertake, and to any extent he desired.

It was upon his return from one of these journeys, he entered Andania in disguise, to ascertain if possible, the state of feeling between the Messenians and their rulers, and the degree of vigilance exercised by the Spartans.

The shades of evening had fallen upon the plains, and the lengthened images of the towers and houses

around the walls were thrown upon the surrounding fields.

The city, in the time of the Messenians so crowded with inhabitants and resounding at night-fall with the shouts of children, and the gaiety and life of their parents, who watched with fond anxiety and partiality their merry gambols, was now as if deserted. The habitations which the young warrior had been accustomed to see were destroyed during the war, and others had been erected; the spots with which his recollections were connected were no longer to be distinguished; his familiar acquaintances had either fallen in the defence of their country, or had been driven into a voluntary banishment by the public misfortune; and the voice of a stranger was here and there heard, as if to taunt the traveller and to assure him that his enemies still possessed the fortress.

After moving from one part of the city to another, he came to a spot which he well knew, as leading to the fountain of Apollo, a favourite resort of the Messenian youth when he was the play-fellow of Panormus, and followed the revered Polychares from city to city, as the veteran, directed by his duty, examined the state of the citadels. Loud and quarrelsome sounds broke

on his ear, and as he approached the place, he observed a number of young men in a state of high excitement, divided into two parties and quarrelling. "Why," said Aristomenes, "do we so early display the innate depravity that dwells in us, and indulge the feelings which embitter the springs of enjoyment? Must even the bud of life be exposed to frost, and baulk the promise of a flower? Even among boys there are some who are oppressed, and some who conquer—from their sports, and the passions they engender, some lessons of wisdom might be learned, were we willing to be taught." With these feelings the Messenian general approached the scene of contest sufficiently near to see and hear what past without being seen.

"This fountain," said a youth, who seemed to be the representative of one party, and whose name was Manticles, "is our own; our fathers played here when they were boys, and sat by it when they were men. We also will be undisturbed here, or fight for the privilege."

"You have no fathers," said a Spartan; "our fathers killed them, and you live by sufferance."

"Yes! you should obey your masters," said another, "and go when you are told. You are permit-

ted to live here, and should better acknowledge the kindness of the state."

"Our fathers," said Manticles, "were the rightful possessors of the city and province, and yours gained it by treachery: ours fought them fairly, and defeated them; yours were thieves, and false at heart, as you are, and took by stratagem what they could not gain by fighting."

"Nay," said the Spartan who first spoke, "you ought to know that it was a Messenian, who betrayed Messenia; but he was the only man who did his duty."

"And Sparta rewarded his honesty," said Gorgus, another of the Messenian youths; "his Spartan honesty! for you are all vile and contemptible in our sight, from King Theopompus and Euryleon, downward, to your own naked uncivilized selves. If you are determined to eject us, stand up and fight for what you claim."

This challenge was at once responded to by the more hasty opponents on both sides; but Manticles endeavoured to restrain his friend. "Stay! Stay!" said the youth; "let us at any rate give a fair field, and if the Spartans are willing to leave

us this one spot, without interference, we are not anxious to quarrel with them, or endanger the happiness of our mothers and sisters in our disputes."

"No!" Gorgus exclaimed, "but this was the favourite resort of Aristomenes, whose name terrifies you cowardly, designing Spartans, and you shall not even taste a drop of the fountain, or pollute it with your touch. Go, go, and take care of yourselves, or wait and be carried home."

The Spartan youth, trained to personal combat, and feeling themselves superior to their opponents in present situation, and, as they imagined, in real courage and power, instantly commenced the attack, which was received by their opponents with a firm unyielding force. The result was not long doubtful, for before Aristomenes could interfere to quiet the storm, and curb the wrath of the offended, the Spartans, finding they would be overpowered, made a hasty retreat, several of them being severely beaten.

The sudden appearance of the Messenian hero among the rejoicing youths, caused a momentary reflux of feeling, a hesitation between fear and

pleasure. But there was a loftiness of carriage, and a manliness of aspect, characterizing the person of Aristomenes so strongly, that his young countrymen could not avoid acknowledging his superiority, and paying him a becoming and almost reverential respect. Some years had passed away, since the time when he attended Panormus, who was still confined in Sparta, to the unfortunate meeting with Euephnus, and the troubles under which he had suffered, gave an additional energy to the corroding influence of time. Their united effect had been to subdue the exuberance of youth, and to increase the decision of his character, giving him also a more stayed expression of feature and person.

Advancing towards the youths, he addressed Gorgus, whose bold and daring speech, had been the cause of the sudden termination of the quarrel. "Pray, fair Sir, why should the circumstance of this fountain, having been the favourite resort of Aristomenes, induce you to encourage a quarrel which has already brought blows, and may terminate in still greater misfortunes to your countrymen?"

"It is true, Sir," the youth replied, "that the Spartans may punish us for resisting the insults of their sons, but we are united in the determination to oppose, if such be attempted; we have few liberties to lose, but this fountain shall be held sacred so long as we live to love and honour the name of Aristomenes."

"But he can have done little to serve his country," said the hero, "who has permitted the enemy to seize it, and to drive away or keep in bondage the lawful possessor."

"Oh! Aristomenes has been long dead," said Manticles, "or he would have been King of Messenia, and we should have been fighting under his banner."

The enthusiastic ardour of the boys, and the reverence with which they mentioned the name of the hero in whom they had been taught to place so much confidence, excited in the heart of the chieftain, a thrilling sensation of hope, and we may add of honest pride, though his praise was told by those who had connected with his name all the romance of their own active and fervid imaginations. What cannot, he thought, be yet done

for Messenia if such be her sons. The open and generous countenance of Gorgus, and his powerful and well formed person, particularly attracted the attention of Aristomenes; but Manticles, though more delicately formed, and with a much more stayed and thoughtful countenance, was not less worthy of esteem, and if unfit for the rigours of war and active service, he possessed a capability of directing the energies of others from the possession of a remarkable control over the warmth and energy of his affections and feelings.

“Aristomenes is not dead, my brave fellow,” said the warrior, “but he is less capable of serving you than you appear to imagine.”

“The Spartans report that he was slain, on mount Ithome, immediately after the conclusion of the war,” said Gorgus, “and the old Messenians, who knew him when he was not so old as we are, say, that he has not been heard of since he conducted the daughter of Polychares, and the widowed wife of Euphaes from the besieged city.”

“I have myself seen him since that,” said the warrior, “and it was but yesterday he crossed the Arcadian border and entered Messenia. But, fear not, my brave boys, the opportunity will come

when you may try your prowess with those who now occupy your possessions, under a brave leader, and it may be that he in whom you appear to have so much confidence may enlist you under his banner."

The person of him who had communicated this strange information was closely observed by the youths, but without any suspicion of his identity with the hero of their imagination. As night came on, the young men one by one withdrew, and returned to their homes, leaving Aristomenes with the two who had acted the part of leaders in the recent dispute.

"And now, fair Sir," said Aristomenes, addressing Manticles, "Who has the honour of calling you his son?"

"I am Sir," he replied, "the son of Theocles."

"Of Theocles the diviner? well do I know him, and right well I love him. Does he dwell in Andania?"

"His residence, Sir, cannot be told, while the Spartans dwell in our land."

"'Tis well," said Aristomenes, "caution must mark our communications to strangers. And who are your parents?" he inquired, turning to Gorgus.

“I am the son of Lyciscus,” the youth replied, “and Ephebolus, the diviner, whom the Spartans slew at the altar in the temple of Jupiter, on Mount Ithome, was my grandfather.”

“Is it indeed so?” said Aristomenes, to whose mind this answer recalled many interesting and painful scenes. “Ephebolus dead, and slain at the altar where Aristodemus sacrificed his only child, the friend of Helen, in place of the daughter of Lyciscus: the gods have punished the crimes of deception and murder in their own sanctuary. Does your father still live? And your sister, where is she?”

“My father is alive,” said the youth, “and my sister is in Andania.”

“If either Theocles or Lyciscus be in Andania,” said the warrior, “go and tell them that Aristomenes is here, and longs to communicate with them.”

The youths amazed to find themselves in the presence of the great Messenian warrior, whom they believed to be dead, and doubtful, whether to believe or deny the assertion of the stranger, looked to each other for information, and then at Aristomenes himself, with so much distrust, as to excite a still greater interest in them. “Fear not,” said

the chieftain, "carry to them this signet, which they will know as mine."

"Aristomenes may follow where we lead," said Gorgus, looking archly at the stranger, "but death will be the result of a foolish or wanton curiosity. Will you come?"

The warrior waved his hand in token of his desire to proceed, and the lads availing themselves of all the secret and unwatched paths, soon brought him into a low and confined street, from which they turned towards the open country, and stopping at a mean looking hut, conducted him in and closed the door. Not a word was spoken, but Gorgus again fixed his scrutinizing eyes upon the stranger, as if to ascertain whether he was still determined to maintain the character he had assumed. By his motions, he intimated that the stranger must remain until he had communicated the necessary information, but in a few minutes returned and led Aristomenes through a series of dark and complicated passages, to a point which seemed to be the termination of the excavations, but led by a secret path into another long chamber, that could not have been traversed by one unacquainted with

its rout. Aristomenes at last found himself in a lofty hall, dimly lighted by lamps, suspended from the roof; but as soon as he had entered, the passage through which he had passed was closed, and by such an ingenious contrivance, he was unable a minute after his admittance to perceive any place from which it would be possible to escape. A doubt, whether he had not incautiously trusted himself to the guidance of his companions passed over his mind, but the thought was evanescent, and his fortitude did not waver. Around a table extending almost the entire length of the hall, many persons were reclining, and appeared to be taking their evening meal. Every eye was instantly turned towards Aristomenes, but Theocles was the first to recognize the Messenian leader.

END OF VOL. I.

